GOLDEN JUBILEE SOUVENIR



PUBLISHED BY:

SRI NIRANJANANANDA SWAMY

Sarvadhikari,

SRI RAMANASRAMAM

TIRUVANNAMALAI, S. INDIA.

FIRST EDITION
PUBLISHED
ON 1ST SEPTEMBER 1946
1000 COPIES

PRINTED BY THE JUPITER PRESS LTD.,
16, SEMBUDOSS STREET, G. T., MADRAS

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HUMBLY LAID AT THE LOTUS-FEET

OF

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

PREFACE

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA'S Realisation is unique and unparalleled in the annals of history. He realised in his boyhood the Eternal Truth, the Self Supreme, without the aid of initiation by any external *Guru*, without the need for a theoretical knowlege or study of the *Sastras* and Scriptures, and without having resorted to any kind of ritualistic form of worship, nay without any kind of *Sadhana* other than his spontaneous realisation of the eternal nature of the "I", the Self Supreme. Half a century has passed since first he sat in the State of Transcendental Silence at the Hill of the Holy Beacon.

ARUNACHALAM ! What did it mean to the boy barely fifteen years old, when he heard it uttered casually by some relative coming from Tiruvannamalai ? Outwardly and for the time being, there was no change. But inwardly, in his heart of hearts, young Venkataramana was lit by the spark of devotion,—an inward awakening to the core of his being. Some five months later, he happened to read the book *Periyapuranam*. It contains the lives of well known Saivite Saints. One reading of the book was enough to make him sure that the life of a Saint is the noblest possible. But the direct urge to BE the Truth Eternal came to him not from any study of books—indeed, apart from *Periyapuranam* he did not study with attention any religious book at all till then nor from any external discipline, but as a result of the unique experience of the eternal nature of the Spirit as the "I" apart from and independent of the physical body. He saw death come and go, while the "I" in him remained as the Immutable Awareness.*

Always indifferent to his studies, this experience made Venkataramana completely indifferent not only to his studies but also to every-

* For a verbatim report (as far as it was humanly possible under the peculiar circumstances in which one had to give an English translation of the impersonal utterances of the Sage in Tamil) of the unique experience of death leading to the immediate realisation of the deathlessness of the "I", and the extraordinary transformation this experience brought about in the life and outlook of young Venkataramana, the reader must refer to V Chapter of *SELF-REALISATION* or the Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

That house in which young Venkataramana had this transcendental experience of the "I" Eternal, has been acquired recently for Sri Ramanasramam, and is now maintained as a place of worship and pilgrimage.

thing in external life. Meditation on the Deathless "I" came naturally to the young Saint who never felt the need to curb or control the mind, because it had already come under the sway of the Self Supreme. Still he continued to go to the school for a few weeks more, —to what purpose, he did not know. In fact, he felt the lonely interior of Minakshi-Sundareswara Temple more congenial to his spirit than the boisterous atmosphere of the school and the playground.

Thus passed six weeks. One day at his home in Madura, while apparently engaged in his class-work, he put aside the books and sat up in his accustomed attitude of meditation. Observing him doing such things more and more often during the past few days, his elder brother took the opportunity to administer a sharp rebuke to the younger one supinely indifferent to his studies. He said " Why all this (show of studying in a school etc.) for one who behaves thus ? " The rebuke went home. It acted like an electric shock with an instantaneous effect. The propriety of the remark gave a quick and firm conviction to the younger one that his place was no longer in the home.

"Arunachala" whispers, at the very next moment, his inner voice. "*That* is my Home " says Venkataramana to himself. "There I must go at once." How ? He does not know. He bundles up the few books by his side, saying that he has to attend a special class at his school. " Take five rupees from my box and pay my college fees " says the elder brother. Arunachala thus provides the trainfare ! After a hasty meal, he turns the pages of an old school atlas to see which place on the railway line is the nearest one to Tiruvannamalai. " Tindivanam," he decides. Three rupees will suffice ; so, out of the five, he leaves two rupees with a small bit of paper on which he scribbles a few words to say he is leaving the place for good. What for ? " In search of his Father ! " How else is he to describe his mission, much more so, his destination, which he must not disclose if he is to succeed in his enterprise ? As to the nature of this enterprise, he is sure it is a meritorious one. Therefore, why should anyone come in search of him, why waste one's money and energy in undoing a good act ? These few thoughts he expresses in fewer words, and leaves the place at once. It is already late, will he catch the train ? That is the lookout

of Arunachala. And when he reaches the station, he finds that the train is yet to come. He purchases a ticket to Tindivanam, and as soon as the train halts at the platform, he finds himself in a compartment. Young Venkataramana is on his way to Arunachala.

That was on the 29th of August 1896.

Who can describe the state of Venkataramana's mind while the train steamed out of the station? The past, even while it was the living present, had little charm for him; and, ever since he had the death-experience, it became as unreal as the shadow of a shade. During all his school-boy career he never cared for the future, and now he cared for it even less. He knew his Father would take care of the future; because, was it not He that 'enticed him from his home'? That He did take such care of His son had been repeatedly confirmed by the events that followed his decision to leave his Madura home. Another instance was soon to rise. The ticket he had actually purchased would take him to a place (Tindivanam) more than twenty miles away from the direct route to Tiruvannamalai, and he did not know this, nor did he care to make enquiries of others. Undistracted by anything that took place around him and indifferent to the bustle and talk in the compartment, he sat in silent contemplation of Arunachala. It was in search of his Father that he had started on his pilgrimage, and, from the moment he boarded the train, he began the search in right earnest within himself. Observing the silent unconcern of the young traveller, a loquacious Moulvi travelling in the same compartment was impelled by curiosity to know his destination. "Tiruvannamalai" said the lad. The Moulvi gave out that he too was going there, or rather to the station next to it. "Station next to Tiruvannamalai!" wondered Venkataramana. Did the train go in that direction at all? The Moulvi then told him that he should get down at Villupuram and take the branch line, which his old school atlas did not show. Surely, Providence was guiding his foot-steps, while he himself remained indifferent to external life.

The train reached Trichinopoly some time in the evening. But for the hasty meal he took before leaving his home, he had had no food since noon. Neither had he any relish for it, because at each succeeding moment he reached new heights of fervent devotion which consum-

ed his very being. As to sleep at night, he was already asleep to the outer world during the day-time. He reached Villupuram at 3 a.m. At sunrise he walked into the town and had a meal in some hotel. When he offered to pay the few annas he had with him, the hotel-proprietor, who had been watching with some admiration the demeanour of the bright-looking youth, declined to take the charges for the meal. Young Venkataramana came back to the station, and investing all the cash he had (just two and half annas) he purchased a ticket to Mambalapattu from which Tiruvannamalai was still 32 miles away. On reaching Mambalapattu, the undaunted youth continued his journey on foot and reached Arayani-Nallur late in the evening on the 30th of August. thus covering a distance of about ten miles.

The nearby temple on a rock attracted his attention. It was the temple of Atulyanatheswara, sanctified by Sri Jnanasambandha who installed the Idol of Sri Arunachaleswara in one of the shrines there. It might have been on account of this and other ancient spiritual associations that when the youth, who had set out in search of his Father, Sri Arunachaleswara, sat in meditation in that temple, he had the vision of a dazzling light which filled the whole place. It is an interesting fact to note that the temple of Atulyanatheswara on the rock is the farthest shrine from Arunachala wherefrom one can see the peak of the Hill of the Holy Beacon. Hence it is also, perhaps, that Venkataramana had the vision of celestial light in that temple. Since none were permitted to stay there for the night, he had to come out along with the priest and his party, who after conducting the evening worship locked the temple doors. Only late at night near the temple at Kilur could Venkataramana get some food, and for drinking water he was led to the nearby house of a Sastri.

Next morning (the 31st of August) he was the guest of one Muttukrishṇa Bhagavatar and since it was the day of Nativity of Lord Krishna, the lad's arrival was considered auspicious. He had his first sumptuous meal since he had left Madura, devoutly served by the lady in the house, who also gave him a bundle of sweetmeats intended as offering to Lord Krishna. Venkataramana had still twenty miles to cover. He knew from the Moulvi that the train went up to and

beyond Tiruvannamalai, but he had no money. He had little use for the ruby-set ear-rings he wore. "Why not get rid of them and get the trainfare?" he thought. Accordingly he pledged the ear-rings and with the money the Bhagavatar gave and the packet of sweets he went back to the station, where he had to wait till dawn next day to catch the train to Tiruvannamalai.

Early in the morning on the 1st of September, 1896, young Venkataramana came to this holy place of Sri Arunachala. From the station he went direct to the Temple. Strange to say, even at that early hour all the temple doors, including those of the *Sanctum Sanctorum* were wide open, as it were, for the Father to receive His Son immediately the latter reached Tiruvannamalai. Unhindered, unnoticed and unhesitating the youth ran in and reported himself to his Father thus:—

O Lord, obedient to Thy call,
Here have I come, deserting all.
No boon I ask, no loss bemoan,
Take me in and make me Thine own.

That very moment all physical and mental excitement disappeared, and he felt perfect peace and bliss unalloyed.

From that day to this, from the 1st of September, 1896 to the 1st of September, 1946, all these fifty years, he has made Arunachala his abode. Having realised the Eternal Truth in his 'teens, the Truth that transcends time and space, he never considered it necessary for him to leave the place and go about spreading his message of inward peace and realisation. This is unprecedented in the history of humanity; and unprecedented also is the fact that within the life-time of the Sage his message has spread even to such remote parts of the world as the Fiji Islands in the East and California in the West.

In commemoration of that day, the 1st of September, 1896, on which young Venkataramana reached Arunachala, and in devout and humble recognition of his fifty years of transcendental life, is published this GOLDEN JUBILEE SOUVENIR, being a chorus of tribute from some of his devotees, far and near.



वन्दे श्रीरमणर्षेराचार्यस्य पदाब्जम् ।
यो मेऽदर्शयदीशं भान्तं ध्वान्तमतीत्य ॥

I bow to the Lotus-feet of Sage Sri Ramana, the great Teacher, Who revealed to me the Lord Supreme in His glory transcending darkness.

श्री काव्यकण्ठ
गणपतिमुनिविरचितम्

Sri Kavyakantha
—*Ganapati Muni*

अरुणाचलेशचरणाम्बुजद्वयस्मरणाधिरूढकलिवारणो मुनिः ।
शरणागतार्तिहरणेऽपि दक्षिणो रमणश्चकास्ति करुणारसोज्ज्वलः ॥

Glory to Sri Ramana, the Sage, Who firmly established in devotion to the Lotus-feet of Arunachaleswara, can undo the evil of the world and the misery of those who take refuge in Him. Glory to Ramana, glowing with merciful love for all!

श्री सुन्दरानन्दस्वामिप्रणीतम्

—*Sundarananda Swami*

ON THIS GOLDEN JUBILEE DAY

1st September, 1946

[*1896—1946*]

This day, just fifty years ago,
What did it to the world portend?
Who marked it when one slender youth
From out his home slipped? Did it send

A ripple through the Cosmic Mind
Of joy that once again a man
Was formed who knew his destiny,
And would fulfil his Self-Lord's plan?

The slender youth, who trudged on foot,
For lack of fares, towards his goal,
Kept straight, nor looked to right nor left
Until the happy day His Soul,

His Self, dissolved his mind's mirage
And spread in all-pervadingness
Throughout the world of forms,
Absorbing them. How then, address

Him from this world of forms? There is,
He says, but one and only way:
"Seek ME, thy SELF, within the depths
Of thine own heart." And so, one day,

He promise makes, that by His Grace,
If effort 's made and will is used
To focus mind on Self alone,
Our minds will sink and vanish, fused

With Him, and me, and selves of all.
Thus on this Jubilee of His
We thank Bhagavan, our Lord, our Self,
The only "I" we know that IS.

We thank Him, and are fain to wish
His form may long with us remain,
Although we know He is within,
The Lord of all, Immortal, One.

—**Ethel G. Merston.**

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SRI RAMANAYA

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA GOD-REALITY INCARNATE

By

Sadhu Ekarasa (Dr. G. H. Mees, M.A., LL. D.)

If a man were to do the greatest deed in the world and come and sit in the presence of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi he would realize that his deed was as nothing compared to the perpetual Deed of Self-realization of the Sage.

If a man were to write the greatest book in the world and come and lay it as an offering before the Sage he would realize that the Sage was a greater Book, which is written from day to day, not with the medium of pen and ink and paper, but without intermediation, and even without any conscious effort, in the inner being of all who care to come and read it.

The request to contribute an article for this Jubilee Volume has been received by the writer of this article with mixed feelings. An endeavour to write about the philosophy of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is like painting the lily. It is impossible to present the Maharshi's philosophy in any better and clearer way or form than he has done himself. There remains the popularization of his philosophy. But that is like vivisection of the lily. A further difficulty is that the philosophy and the life of Sri Ramana Maharshi are inextricably connected. In the case of other personalities it is always possible to make a distinction between theory and practice, or between spirituality and intellect on the one hand and action on the other hand. With the Maharshi no such distinction exists.

It is in accordance with the spirit of the time that every man, thing or event of interest should be written about. The Maharshi is above the spirit of the time. Long after the spirit of the time will have been succeeded by the spirit of another Age, Sri Ramana Maharshi will be remembered as an Immortal. His Immortality stands out from his every word and look. It lives in the inner heart of all who have had the great privilege to come and sit in his presence. It is reflected only poorly in the books and articles that have been written about him. How could it be otherwise? No one can

truly describe God or Truth. Even so, no one can truly describe a Son of God and an embodiment of Truth. The *Mounam* (mystic Silence) which expresses God-Reality, is the fit way of describing the Sage of *Mounam* also.

This article, therefore, can never do justice to the greatness of the Sage. An attempt may be made, however, to say a few things about the uniqueness of the Sage, about the Sage as *Guru*, and the significance of the present celebration.

After having studied the lives and ways of teaching of Saints and Sages of the world, belonging to various traditions and various periods of time, it strikes one that Sri Ramana falls into a class of his own. No one—as far as one knows—has achieved God-Realization merely by hearing a name of God uttered heedlessly and without any preliminary instruction in philosophy or theology, without passing any traditional initiatory rites, without having a Guru, an inspirer or even only an instructor in traditional matters. But Sri Ramana received "initiation" by merely hearing the name of Arunachala, pronounced only for the purpose of conveying information about a journey. Sri Ramana claimed his spiritual heritage without even having been told that there was a heritage to claim. He knew it of his own accord. He went to claim it without receiving any directions on his way. He took it without any formalities.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana acts with regard to those who come to him for realization, inspiration and instruction, according to his own being. As God, the Reality in the innermost Heart, worked and works His ways directly within his soul, in the same manner he works his ways directly within the heart of those who consider themselves or aspire to be his disciples. For this he needs no *mantras*, no verses, no ritual or conventional formalities. For, he is a *Guru* in the true sense of the word. The word "*Guru*" means "dispeller of darkness". The Darkness which needs dispelling is that of Ignorance of God-Reality. The Light that dispels it is the Light of the Ether, "Quintessence", the Eternal Abode, the Natural State. The Maharshi's way is as direct as it is simple. But it is so profound that it fails to reach the consciousness of many. For many come to him for something definite, or, in other words, finite. They desire knowledge, vision, grace, bliss, all kinds of directions, and numerous things more in terms belonging to all the languages of India. In the mind of the enquirer or suppliant these things are mental concepts or thought-forms. He does not understand that they stand in between the true Initiation into the Mystery of Being and himself. Only if he is able to ignore these concepts and surrender them,

as it were, at the feet of the Maharshi, the continuously radiating Light of the Maharshi will be able to penetrate the Darkness of his consciousness. It is often imagined that "renunciation at the feet of the *Guru*" implies renunciation of worldly matters like worries, family, occupation, sinfulness, and so on. But actually it implies renunciation of the mind, or, in other words, of all mental preoccupations, pre-conceived ideas, prejudices, dogmas, psychical attachments, tendencies and desires. For, these various categories of thought-forms form the props of the separate "I". Many times it has happened that visitors and resident disciples have asked Maharshi to vouchsafe them initiation, grace, blessings or spiritual experience, and that he replied, "I am always giving it. If you cannot apprehend it, what am I to do?" Often, however, the Maharshi, when he sees that a disciple does not respond to his *Mounam*, comes down from his supreme level for the purpose of inspiring or instructing the mind of a disciple by reciting a story, by writing verses or by explaining philosophical questions.[1]

Dwelling in the Eternal, the Maharshi makes no distinctions of person, and "looks with an equal eye" on a learned scholar and a simple peasant, a Maharaja and a sweeper, an old man and a young woman, a man and a dog, a householder and a monk. But though Sri Ramana has realized the mystic "equality" of souls in God-Reality, he knows that in the world of appearances, which those who have profane outlook consider to be the real world, no such thing as equality exists or can exist. Once a visitor said during a conversation: "There should be equality among men." Sri Ramana promptly remarked: "Then let them go to sleep; in sleep all are equal."

In contradistinction to other *Gurus* of a less exalted level, who are inclined to be aware of their spiritual superiority in relation to others, Sri Ramana Maharshi considers all beings to be potential *Jnanis* with God-Reality shining within them, even if they are not aware of it. Some of his utterances run parallel to that of the eighth century mystic Hui Neng who said: "The only difference between a Buddha and an ordinary man is that one realizes it while the other does not." In one conversation Sri Ramana said: "Vivekananda asked Sri Ramakrishna: 'Have you seen God?' I say: 'Is there anybody who has *not* seen God!'"

1 As a matter of fact, every word the Sage spoke, every line he wrote, he did so only at the request of some devotee or other who sought the Sage's presence for spiritual enlightenment.

Sri Ramana proclaims that life is full of latent happiness for those whose lot it is to struggle with the most depressing propensities to the *Samsara,* because the Divine Heritage is ever there, waiting to be received. God-Reality is ever present within the Heart of all. The act of full surrender of the man of Darkness to the Lord of Light is bound to reveal it as the dawn dispels the darkness of the night. And just as the dawn is not the first dawn, but reveals the eternal light of the sun, the dawn of Self-realization is not a new creation, but the remembering of a lost state of consciousness. It is an entering into the ancient heritage.

In this connection Sri Ramana teaches that the *Guru* lives as the Immortal and Eternal Light within every being. The Path to that *Guru* is the *Guru* in the world of Manifestation. The Path to the Father is through the Son. To quote the Maharshi's own words: "One must not look upon the *Guru* as a person; he is not anything else than the real Self of the disciple. When that Self is realized, then there is neither *Guru* nor disciple."

Knowing the value of the tradition that he should not look upon the *Guru* as a person, there is for a disciple yet a very sweet and wonderful element of hope and promise in it to think that Bhagavan Sri Ramana, though a Son of God, is also a son of human parents like himself. What a world of possibilities for his own future is suggested by this knowledge! He has heard of liberated *Devas* or Angels, but what use is their achievement to him, for he is not one of them. But a liberated *man* is another matter!

In this light there is a good excuse (for fear of looking upon the *Guru* as a person) for celebrating the great event for which this book sees the light of day. In this light the coming of Bhagavan Sri Ramana to Arunachala, and his fifty years' stay there, assume significance not only for the spiritual children of the Maharshi, but for all humanity.

Fifty years! From the point of view of the restless wordly mind which delights in movement and change, an unbroken stay of fifty years in one place seems to be a tremendous achievement. It is indeed unique. But surely Sri Ramana has never looked upon it as being in any way remarkable. He has attained the Great Magnet of the World, the Centre of the Heart, and became as immovable as his Father, Lord Arunachala. How could the piece of iron leave the magnet of its own accord? It has no will of its own.

In a large number of traditional contexts the number 50 suggests and symbolizes fullness and perfection, in connection with the World of Manifestation. In Hinduism it is found in the 50 letters of the Sanskrit Alphabet, the 50 "beads" of the *Varnamala* or Rosary of the Goddess Kali, and the 50 coils of *Sakti*. In Greek, Hebrew and Arabic traditions the number 50 symbolizes the manifestations of new life in spiritual birth and resurrection. In Jewish tradition the number 50 finds expression in the mystery of Pentecost, the 50th day of spiritual resurrection and joy, and in the Jubilee year, every 50th year, which was one in which spiritually a new beginning was made in the World of Manifestation. The very word "Jubilee" is derived from the Hebrew word "Yobel," which is a word for the trumpet calling men to Resurrection! The Jewish Jubilee was a commemoration of the Original State, the State of Paradise in which man lived at one with God. Bhagavan Sri Ramana calls that state the Natural State. What has been called by older traditions the Resurrection from the Dead is nothing but the return to that Original State of Oneness in which there is no separateness, duality or multiplicity. The Resurrection from the Dead is the same as the attainment of Self-Realization which is the re-attainment of the Natural State. The end is the beginning, and the beginning is the end.

In the light of these old traditions the event that we are commemorating assumes a special significance for all who are celebrating it. In accordance with the tradition of the Jubilee Year the event of fifty years ago is that of the Natural State of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, and the event at which it is commemorated fifty years later is that of the spiritual renewal of his disciples and admirers, and, in a wider sense, of the world.

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA
Sustainer of Spiritual Reality

By

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I
THE LIVING REALITY

It is somewhat surprising that many students of religion assume that the religious seers, the true representatives of religious genius, belong wholly to the past and we to-day have to live on the memory of the past. If religion is a living truth, if it has any vitality, it must be capable of producing men who from time to time bear witness to the truth and confirm and correct from their own experience the religious tradition. When the springs of experience dry up, our love for religion is a mere affectation, our faith a belief and our behaviour a habit with no reality behind it. In the Indian religious tradition religion has meant not an imaginative or intellectual apprehension of Reality but its embodiment in regenerated living. Religion should energise our consciousness, transform our character and make us new men. The truly religious are those who have solid hold of the unseen Reality in which we ordinary men merely believe. They are not freaks proclaiming the reality of spirit, which is esoteric and intense. They tell us that they have a direct knowledge of the Real of which we have indirect or inferential knowledge. For them God is an Abiding Fact, a Living Presence, and in the consciousness of this fact their whole existence is transformed. These artists of the inner life are of different types. Some are full of poetry and music; others are vigorous men of action; still others are solitary souls. Despite these differences they walk the same road, speak the same language of the soul and belong to the same family.

The Indian tradition has been kept alive by seers who were born in every age and incarnated the great ideal. We have such God-engrossed souls even to-day. It is our good fortune that we have with us to-day a living embodiment of God-centred life, a perfect image of the life divine in the mirror of human existence. Sri Ramana Maharshi is not a scholar; he has no erudition, but he has wisdom that comes from direct experience of Reality,

the wisdom we acquire through the discipline, not of intellect but of one's nature, through chastity, poverty and obedience. The possession of this wisdom yields the fruits of spirit, love and purity, courage and humility, courtesy and holiness.

II

HIS SPONTANEOUS REALISATION

Sri Ramana was born on the 30th December, 1879, with a latent disposition to religion. He was no good at studies because his heart was elsewhere. His reading of *Periapuranam* with its account of the selfless devotion of *bhaktas* made a deep impression on his devout nature. The change which took him away from worldly pursuits is thus described in his own words: "It was six weeks before I left Madura for good that the great change in my life took place. It was so sudden. One day I sat up alone on the first floor of my uncle's house. I was in my usual good health. But a sudden and unmistakable fear of death seized me. I felt I was going to die, and at once set about thinking what I should do. I did not care to consult anyone, be he a doctor, elder or friend. I felt I had to solve the problem myself then and there. The shock of the fear of death made me at once introspective or 'introverted'. I said to myself mentally, i. e. without uttering the words, 'Now death is come, what does it mean? Who is it that is dying? This body dies.' I at once dramatized the situation. I extended my limbs and held them rigid, as though *rigor-mortis* (death-stiffening) had set in. I imitated a corpse to lend an air of reality to my further investigation. I held my breath and kept my mouth closed, pressing the lips tightly together, so that no sound could escape. 'Well then,' said I to myself. 'This body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the crematory and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of my body am "I" dead? Is the body "I"? This body is silent and inert. But I am still aware of the full force of my personality and even of the sound of "I" within myself, as apart from the body. So "I" am a Spirit transcending the body. The material body dies, but the Spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am, therefore, the deathless Spirit.' All this was not a feat of intellectual gymnastics, but came as a flash before me vividly as living TRUTH, something which I perceived immediately, without any argument almost. 'I' was something very real, the only real thing in that state, and all the conscious activity that was connected with my body was centred on that. The 'I' or myself was holding the focus of attention with a powerful fascination. *Fear of death vanished at once and for ever. The absorption in the Self has continued from that moment right up to now.*"[1]

[1] The Sage of Arunagiri (1945) pp. 8 and 9

Growing absorption in spiritual matters made Sri Ramana indifferent to his studies. When rebuked, he left his home on Saturday, the 29th of August, 1896, leaving a note behind. "I have in search of my Father, according to His command, started from this place. On a virtuous enterprise indeed has this embarked. Therefore, for this act none need grieve nor to trace this out need money be spent." Thus under a sense of Divine Command he left Madura, and, after some trouble, reached Tiruvannamalai on the 1st of September.

When he visited the temple he fell into a trance. In such conditions a sense of oneness with the Ultimate Reality is produced. Sri Ramana renounced the world and became an *Avadhuta* which is a compound word of four letters *A-va-dhu-ta*. The first stands for *Aksharatva* or imperishability; the second for *Varenyatva* or the summit of perfection; the third for the destruction of the bonds which implicate us in the temporal process, and the last for the realisation of the truths conveyed by the great passage, "That art thou."[1] To attain such a condition of harmonising consciousness has been the aim of religious men. If we lose ourselves in the hopes and desires, in the fears and cravings, which wax and wane with the accidents of the outer world, if we yield to the chance allurements of time and space, we will lose our soul. Doubt which comes to us from outside is insignificant as compared with the doubt that corrodes from within. The true evil is not death of the body, but the failure of one's nature, the death of faith in the Ultimate Reality.

III

SPIRITUAL VALUE OF THE SAGE'S PRESENCE

In this thought, Sri Ramana adopts the metaphysical position of *Advaita Vedanta*. He speaks to us of the Divine which is the pure subject from which all objectivity is excluded. The "I" is different from the "me." The Self is not the body which perishes, not the senses which suffer the same fate as the body, not life, mind or intellect. It is the pure Spectator, the *Sakshin*, which is the same in all. We get to realise it not by metaphysical theorising but by spiritual discipline. Reality impinges on the unreality of life and to discover reality, absolute concentration and consecration are essential. We have to still our desires, steady our impulses, tread the ethical path. We cannot see so long as our vision is engrossed in outer forms, but those who turn their gaze

[1] अक्षरत्वाद् वरेण्यत्वाद् धूतसंसारबन्धनात् । तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यत्वादवधूत इतीर्यते ॥

inwards behold it. No one can see properly so long as he remains divided and disintegrated in his consciousness. We must become inwardly whole and free. We cannot acquire this wholeness or integrity if we do not root out our selfish impulses. We cannot know truly or act rightly so long as we are too afraid, too indolent or too self-centred. To see the Real and not merely the things of the world, the eye must be inverted.[1] God is within us.[2] Not comfort but control is happiness. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," says Jesus. Dedication to God means denial of the ego. We must empty the self in the abyss of God. This process is helped by the practice of unselfish service (*Nishkama Karma*), devotion (*Bhakti*), mind-control (*Yoga*), and inquiry (*Vichara*). Inquiry into self, religious worship, ethical service are means to this realisation. The end of all worship, *puja*, *japa*, *dhyana*, is communion with God. With increasing intensity in our devotion, the distance between the human and the Divine diminishes. Indian thought believes in four stages of God-realisation—*salokya*, where God and the worshipper dwell in the same world, *samipya*, where the devotee is near the Divine, *sarupya*, where the devotee assimilates more and more the forms and attributes of the Divine, and *sayujya*, where the devotee is united to the Divine.

When one discovers the Divine within oneself, one must discover it also in the outer world of men and things. While the heights within are revealed to those who strenuously exclude all that lies without, the process of seeing all in the fulness of the Divine is more arduous. God is both eternal silence and perpetual activity, the unmoved witness and the ground of all that is, the metaphysical Absolute and the personal Lord. The Divine reveals itself anew in all life and existence. Nothing on earth is excluded from the Divine Consciousness. The Divine is the life which gives birth to us all and is farther than our farthest thought. Sri Ramana dwells not only in a world of pure subjectivity but has also a sense of the Infinite that is in all. As he has eliminated his selfish ego he becomes the Voice of the whole, the Conscience of all that is. As he has no selfish desires and no sense of agency, he enters into the world-movement and carries out the functions expected of him by that Universal Spirit. Honour and dishonour, praise and blame, do not move him. Actions are not subject to the necessity of nature but are centred in the freedom of the Divine.

[1] आवृत्तचक्षुः—Katha Up. II, 1, 1.

[2] आत्मैव देवताः सर्वाः सर्वम् आत्मन्यवस्थितम् ।

It is a false assumption to hold that the spiritually strong have no patience with human weakness. They are not insensitive to human sorrow. The *rishis* are revealers of Reality, which is all-bliss. They do not keep their discoveries to themselves. They have a social significance. By getting into their company, we, ordinary people, realise the actuality of the world of spirit and catch something of their fire. The great of spirit are ministering angels who assist, protect and help those who are in need. Association with the holy people produces detachment from fruits of action. Such detachment leads to desirelessness; from desirelessness arises stability of mind; Liberation in life is then achieved.[1] The Upanishad asks the aspirant for spiritual life to approach, fuel in hand, a teacher versed in scripture, steady in his realisation of the Supreme.[2] The teacher shows the path. His very presence radiates peace and joy. He refashions the souls of those who look to him for help. With keen psychological insight he understands the needs of those who approach him and satisfies them. Like all saints, he has the foundation in God; his surface is intertwined with everything that exists. He loves all beings as he loves himself and cannot rest until everyone mirrors the Divine in his life.

The saints are the sustainers of society. Philo remarks: "Households, cities, countries and nations have enjoyed great happiness, when a single individual has taken heed of the good and beautiful. Such men not only liberate themselves; they fill those they meet with a free mind." The true sages possess the inner joy and peace which are independent of outer circumstances. Their happiness is not dependent on outer things. They have passed beyond the forms of social life. Their renunciation is spontaneous and does not involve any idea of sacrifice. They work for the fulfilment of the Divine in the world, for the good of all beings, for the fulfilment of the Purpose. They are one in consciousness and action with the Divine.

To suggest that the spiritual souls are expected to abstain from action in the world is incorrect. The opportunities which the world offers are to be used for self-development. Life is a game where we should act our parts. We are all cast for different roles, and our business is to play them in the right spirit. We may lose the game but we should not mind it. It is the play that matters and not the score we make.

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[1] सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् । निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्त्वं निश्चलतत्त्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

[2] Mundaka Upanishad 1. 2. 12.

IV

REALITY TO BE SOUGHT

If the world is to be saved, it can only be by the intrusion of another world into it, a world of higher truth and greater reality than that which is now submerged by the overwhelming discords and sufferings of the present time. Our failure to develop contact with this world of Reality is the cause of our malady. Men like SRI RAMANA recall us to that larger dimension of Reality to which we really belong, though we are generally unaware of it.

THE MASTER'S CALL TO FREEDOM

It needs high courage to receive Thy call
And leap responding to Thy silver voice:
It needs proud wisdom to give up our all
And in a self-unprisonment rejoice.

We are in love with our unluminous
Flesh-dungeon; we have grown afraid of light.
Our fetters have become so dear to us
That we should not exchange them and our night—

For freedom and dawn. From age to age
The spirit has been captive in a cage.
Our misery, how shall we break the bars
And leap into wide heaven once again?
How shall we make our weak wings woo the stars
And rise out of this prisonment of pain?

We ask no mortal boon, we do not seek
Such earthly favours as but laugh for an hour.
Master! we do not hunger for unique
Distinctions of fame, of wealth or power.
We only beg the mastery to curb
Doubt to deep faith, unpublished and superb.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.

॥ प्रार्थना ॥

PRAYER

साधु वाऽसाधु वा कर्म यद्यदाचरितं मया ।
तत्सर्वं दयया नाथ गृहाणाराधनं मम ॥

Kindly accept, O my Lord, whatever action, good or bad, I have done, as my humble adoration of Thee.

जगतां नायक स्वामिन् देशिक स्वात्मनायक ।
त्राहि त्राहि कृपासिन्धो पूजां पूर्णतरां कुरु ॥

Save us, save us, O Lord, O Master, Ocean of Mercy, Protector of all the worlds, Guide of the Pure Self; and make this worship of ours perfect.

ज्ञानतोऽज्ञानतो वापि यन्मयाचरितं पुरा ।
तव कृत्यमिति ज्ञात्वा क्षमस्व रमणप्रभो ॥

O Lord Ramana, forgive all previous actions of mine, done consciously or unconsciously, taking them as Thy own service.

हृत्पद्मकर्णिकामध्ये ज्ञानेन सह सद्गुरो ।
प्रविश त्वं महायोगिन् सर्वैर्भक्तगणैस्सह ॥

O Gracious Master, O Great Yogin, enshrine Thyself in the centre of the cavity of my Heart-Lotus along with Self-realization and with all the hosts of Thy devotees.

॥ सच्चिदानन्दमूर्ती रमणः ॥

THE GRACIOUS MASTER

अरुणगिरिमुपेतं सच्चिदानन्दमूर्तिं
रमण इति पृथिव्यां विश्रुतं ज्ञानसूर्यम् ।
गहनहृदयविद्यां लीलया बोधयन्तं
सततमहममेयं सद्गुरुं संस्मरामि ॥

I remember constantly the Gracious Master, who is incomprehensible, Who has His abode on the Arunachala, Whose form is pure Existence—Consciousness—Bliss, Who is renowned throughout the world as Sage Ramana, Who is the Sun of Wisdom, and Who teaches in the simplest way the profound Lore of the Self.

अन्तर्यश्च बहिर्विधूततिमिरं ज्योतिर्मयं शाश्वतं
स्थानं प्राप्य विराजते विनमतामज्ञानमुन्मूलयन् ।
पश्यन्विश्वमपीदमुल्लसति यो विश्वस्य पारे पर-
स्तस्मै श्रीरमणाय लोकगुरवे शोकस्य हन्त्रे नमः ॥

Salutations to Sri Ramana, the universal Master, the Dispeller of misery from the world, the One Who chases away the darkness of His devotees and displays Himself as the Eternal Consciousness inhering in the heart, blazing both within and without, bereft of the least trace of ignorance—the One Who shines as the transcendental Truth underlying the world and beyond!

EAST AND WEST MEET IN MAHARSHI

BY

Banning Richardson, M.A., (Hons.) (Cantab), A.B., (Princeton).

Can you imagine being influenced more greatly by a man you have never spoken to than by any other man you have ever met? I am not referring merely to ideas or "representation" of personality, as may be the case for instance with Jesus Christ and sincere Christians, or Krishna, Vishnu or Shiva amongst different sects of Hindus, or of Mahomed *vis-à-vis* the majority of Mussalmans. It is possible, no doubt, to have a direct spiritual or psychic experience of such personalities which will completely alter one's life. For instance, the story of St. Paul is typical; but what we are concerned with here is one's experience of men in the flesh.

Have you, then, ever been with a man almost constantly, during the daytime, for three days and never spoken to him because speech seemed superfluous; and yet have gone away with his image imprinted more firmly in your heart and mind than those of persons you have known intimately for many years?

Had anyone asked me a similar question ten years ago, I should have doubted his sincerity, or I should have considered that the enthusiasm of a disciple was leading to poetic exaggeration. And yet, nine years ago, I had just such an experience, and the spiritual influence of him who impressed me so deeply has increased with the passing years, though I have communicated with him rarely, and then only by letter; and I have scarcely read his published works, because I felt no need to do so.

Members of my father's family have been wanderers for many generations, as is the case with so many Scotsmen; so it is small wonder that I was born in England and educated, except for final years at Cambridge, in Canada and the United States. When I had just graduated from Princeton University I was introduced to the first Indian I had ever met. He was Dhan Gopal Mukerji, author of that moving book *My Brother's Face*. A Cambridge

graduate himself, he had been living in America for many years. He was a master at the Dalton School in New York; but I called on him at his summer home in one of the beautiful river-valleys of northern Connecticut. Ever since the age of nine or ten I had been deeply interested in religion, and during the years just preceding our meeting, I was more and more drawn to books on occultism and mysticism; so when he said that during one of my vacations from Cambridge I should fly to India and visit some of the centres of spiritual teaching in the Himalayas, I took the suggestion quite naturally and said I would try to do so. Therefore, when, through a series of "accidents" I was asked to come to India for two and a half years to lecture on English literature at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, I accepted immediately, as I had had no chance to carry out Dhan Gopal's suggestion while "up" at Cambridge.

Before sailing for India I returned to spend the summer in Canada and the United States. In America there is a pleasant custom that when a friend or relation sails abroad, one gives him a book or two to read on the voyage. Among the books I was given in New York when I sailed for India was one from my godmother, a Roman Catholic by birth, and perhaps by belief, in a vague sort of way. It was *A Search in Secret India* by Paul Brunton.

The angels and spiritual guides who help us to fulfil our destinies must often chortle with delight at the ironies they are instrumental in bringing about in human affairs. What could be more ironic than a Roman Catholic godmother of a dovout Protestant, going out to teach in a Cambridge Mission college in India, giving him a book which effected the first big step in turning him, first, from orthodox Christianity to an heretical form, and, finally, to the "Religion of Self-Realization," if it can be so called without doing it violence?

During the subsequent two years, up to the time of my marriage, I was soaked in Christian atmosphere. I lived in a chummery at St. Stephen's College with four other Englishmen, of whom one was a parson, two had been theological students, and the fourth was a convert to Quakerism, and so a student of Christian mysticism. I mention this fact only to show that when, twenty months after arriving in India, I paid my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam, I had been virtually a theological student for the previous year and a half. However, though this tended to make me see Sri Ramana Maharshi through Christian eyes, it also helped greatly towards my theoretical and practical knowledge of religion, and made me more sensitive to and appreciative of mystical experience.

The India of fakirs, rope tricks and tigers had appealed to me in childhood, but as I grew up it was mystic India that made an appeal. Through my mother I had come into touch with spiritualism of the finest type, and the teaching that I received from spiritual Masters pointed eastwards, and specially towards India. Books like the *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East*, by Baird T. Spalding, were recommended to me, and these developed in me the longing to sit at the feet of a great Indian sage. Therefore, when I read *A Search In Secret India* on the ship, I was ravished by Brunton's description of the Sage of Tiruvannamalai; and in spite of my orthodox Christian religion I determined to seek out this great teacher at the earliest possible date.

The opportunity came in May, 1937. I had been invited to attend an inter-religious students conference at Alwaye, in Travancore, and I travelled south from Delhi during the Easter vacation, my head bursting with questions to ask Sri Maharshi. But the questions were never asked; though they have been answered, one by one, during the intervening years, by "my" Real Self. The reason the questions were never asked was that when I was in the presence of the Master I was so filled with joy and peace that the desire to ask questions disappeared. This happened throughout the brief three days I stayed at Sri Ramanasramam, though admittedly a violent reaction took place immediately after I left.

II

It has been my fate that I should meet and know great and famous men and women from all parts of the world, including saints like Sri Bhagavan Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi, religious leaders like the late Archbishop Temple of Canterbury, Presidents of the United States, Ministers and Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France and other countries, great musicians like Toscanini, Chaliapin and Egon Petri, scientists like Fritz Haber and Lord Rutherford, and many others. In such circumstances one undergoes a process of clarification of values and of realization of human failings. I have often been profoundly shocked by the pettiness and lack of spiritual understanding of some of these "great men." The consequence is that one comes slowly to realize that only a saint can match one's idealization of human thought and conduct. So when one comes into the presence of a man who is "good" not merely because he shuns "evil," but because his love is universal and falls alike on the just and the unjust, then one experiences immediate

recognition of a soul that is not great as the World values greatness, but great when compared to an absolute standard of values—a precious stone, an emerald without flaw. It is a difference not merely of quality, but of kind.

I have never been long enough with Gandhiji to say whether my impression of his spirit is equally exalted, but in the presence of Sri Bhagavan Maharshi I felt an inward joy which suffused my consciousness and made "thinking" seem superfluous. One communes with the Divine; thought is useful only later when one seeks to analyze and understand the communion, and even then its value is much over-rated. It is over-rated because, more often than not, it leads one away from one's super-conscious apprehension of Being into a whirlpool of egoism disguised as reality.

Such an experience was mine when I left Tiruvannamalai. So strong was my egoistic desire to explain all spiritual matters in orthodox Christian terms, that, no sooner had I read that Sri Bhagavan had as a boy attended a mission school, than I insisted on explaining away his teaching as a mere adaptation of Christ's teaching. I realize now how near I was to the truth—truth which would have revealed itself to me then had I felt the need of discarding my pride in favour of humility.

It is of course true that Sri Bhagavan teaches what Jesus the Christ taught. सत्यम् is एकम्, and He who taught 2000 years ago that 'I am in my Father, and my Father is in me. I and my Father are one,' said in fact the same as He who teaches today in Tiruvannamalai,

> "See thyself and see the Lord."
> That is the revealed word, and hard is its sense indeed,
> For the seeing Self is not to be seen,
> How then is the Sight of the Lord?
> To be food unto Him, that indeed is to see Him.

Only, their audiences were different, with different religious traditions and at different levels of understanding. Had Christ said "See thyself and see the Lord," he would have been immediately attacked, even by moderate Jews for blasphemy of the worst type. Indeed, he was attacked when he went no farther than saying, "I and my Father are one." But his very moderation has led to later misinterpretation of his message as meaning "I alone am and will be the incarnation of God."

III

Two main criticisms are levelled by Westerners against the tradition that has produced Sri Maharshi. The first is that of the materialist and some Christians, and takes the form of a condemnation of what may be called the *sadhu* or *sannyasin* tradition. The second is specifically Christian and asserts that lack of the doctrine of Grace vitiates Hindu teaching.

The first argument is scarcely worth refuting, were it not for the fact that it is so widespread, specially in England and North America, and till it is effectively controverted, there is small chance of the West awakening to an understanding of spiritual values. Taken in its crudest form it simply means that unless one is doing something of utilitarian value he is a traitor to the service of humanity; and Christians underline this argument by pointing to the active work—healing and preaching—which Christ carried on, as opposed to the passive attitude of Indian mystics, the majority of whom seem indifferent to the world. This argument is on a par with the Western saying, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." In other words, those who have the ability to "succeed" in the world, do so; those who can't, turn to teaching as a profession. Unfortunately this is to some extent true, in India as well as in Western countries. But, in the West it is connected with a utilitarian philosophy of life which has led to Nazism and Communism on the one hand, and to the self-indulgent, luxury-worshipping democracies on the other. Activity is the basis of all life, but modern civilization has taken one particular form of activity—what may be called the "intellectual-physical", and made it the only recognized form of activity, thus neglecting the spiritual basis of the civilization on which it is founded. This has been a gradual and cumulative process which started in the Middle Ages when the so-called re-discovery of Greek culture resulted in the raising of Aristotle to a position of intellectual dominance.

Aristotle may be termed the first scientist of Western civilization. His conception of spirit was, like that of the nineteenth century evolutionists, that of an attribute which emerges out of the primeval slime. So, when medieval European scholars turned away from the truly spiritual tradition of Plato and his Alexandrian follower Plotinus to the scientific but fundamentally anti-spiritual Aristotle, they sacrificed the basis of their civilization along with a great deal of obscurantism which admittedly had to go.

With the coming of the Renaissance the next inevitable step was taken, —science was separated from religion, which meant that it became its own

master, uncontrolled by spiritual direction. Finally, in the eighteenth century, which may be said to be the last peak of Christian civilization, religion was separated from philosophy and the devastation was complete.

The truly spiritual life became completely alien to the main stream of civilization. Intellect, applied to the solution of material problems, reigned supreme. Marx and Engels, Schopenhauer, Neitzsche, Spencer, Huxley, Emerson, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw are the prophets of this age of doom. Man's material condition has been raised to the position of a god, and there is no limit to the greed for 'higher' standards of living, even after poverty has been abolished. There could be only one logical outcome to such a false-based civilization— self-destruction; and the atom bomb is the instrument of suicide.

This is the civilization, these are the men that condemn the Indian quietist tradition, who would point to Sri Bhagavan as "inactive," as doing less for mankind than Christ. But, according to such standards, the artisan should be considered the highest type of man. The carpenter and the blacksmith "do" more for mankind than the teacher and the priest. And indeed we find this is becoming the case more and more. Nowadays, in England, France and America, the factory workers are being paid more than the professional classes. By such a standard certainly Sri Bhagavan is to be considered not of much value. But such a standard, as I have tried to show, is based on a completely false view of life, which is as anti-Christ as it is anti-Sri Maharshi "By their fruits ye shall know them," cannot be taken to mean "by the material goods they produce," but rather— "by their thoughts and actions we shall know their true nature." And the thoughts of Sri Bhagavan have now in his own lifetime girdled the world and set men thinking again about the real meaning of life. This is his form of service to mankind. Such truly creative activity dwarfs the feverish rush of lesser men who dare to criticize Sri Ramana's "inactivity".

A disciple once asked Sri Bhagavan why he didn't go about and preach the truth to the people at large. He answered,

> **"How do you know I am not doing it? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people around? Teaching is simple communication of knowledge; it can really be done in silence only What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another, who sits in a holy presence and goes away**

after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is the better, to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending out Inner Force?

"Again, how does speech arise? There is abstract knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great-grandson of the original source. If the word can produce effect, judge for yourself how much more powerful must be the preaching through silence. But people do not understand this simple, bare truth, the truth of their everyday, ever-present, eternal experience. This truth is that of the Self. Is there anyone unaware of the Self? But they do not like even to hear of this truth, whereas they are eager to know what lies beyond, about heaven, hell and re-incarnation ....."[1]

Again, he was asked, "Does my realization help others?" And he answered:—

"Yes, and it is the best help that you can possibly render to others. Those who have discovered great truths have done so in the still depths of the Self. But really there are no 'others' to be helped. For the Realized Being sees only the Self, just as the goldsmith sees only the gold while valuing it in various jewels made of gold. When you identify yourself with the body, name and form are there. But when you transcend the body-consciousness, the 'others' also disappear. The Realized One does not see the world as different from Himself."

The disciple then asked, "Would it not be better if the saints mix with others?" And quick the reply came, "There are no others to mix with. The Self is the only reality . . . . Your duty is TO BE and not to be this or that. 'I AM THAT I AM' sums up the whole truth: the method is summarised in 'BE STILL.' [2]

IV

With regard to the criticism that saints in the Hindu tradition, like Bhagavan Sri Maharshi, don't do physical healing, nor has any of them risen from the dead like Jesus the Christ, one can only say this:—Jesus was certainly an exceptionally great spirit or, possibly, the greatest known to mankind. He wanted to make men realize that God was not the fierce God of the Old Testament Hebrews, but a living, merciful God. Secondly, He, like Sri Maharshi, wanted men to realize that the Kingdom of God lay within them and that if they would look within they would be given unlimited power to

1 *Maharshi's Gospel*, I. pp. 16-17.
2 *Maharshi's Gospel*, I. pp. 36-37.

help their fellowmen. The most striking means of such power was to be the healing of the sick ; but He made it clear that those who had faith in Him (i.e., in the truth of what He said and did, and of His divine nature) were to be given this gift only as a means of making men realize that the real world lies behind the barrier of the flesh and that men must remould their lives and their philosophy of life if they would enter into this world.

In other words, Christ used healing as a sign of hope and of the reality of the Spiritual Kingdom. To say that all other spiritual teachers must use the same method is, to say the least, narrow-minded.

As for the Resurrection of Jesus, an impartial study of the evidence suggests that it did take place. My belief is that no sincere Hindu would find any difficulty in accepting it, for it fits in with his tradition of divine beings assuming bodily form when necessary and convenient. Whether or not we accept the Christian teaching that Jesus Christ's Resurrection is the only one known to history, we must admit that it is the only one backed by considerable historical evidence. However, that its apparent uniqueness, therefore, affirms the unique nature of Jesus Christ does not necessarily follow.

Again, we must look at Christ's intention in the Resurrection. The Gospels are filled with prophecies of the Resurrection, and their intention in this matter is clear, when Jesus says, "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke, XVI, 31), as well as from other passages. The intention is, then, (i) to show finally and positively that death has no reality, and (ii) that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah whom the Old Testament Hebrew prophets had promised.

A very powerful Jewish sect, the Sadducees, at the time of Christ denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the existence of spirits. To disprove their arguments once and for all, as well as to ensure that mankind, or a part of it at least, should be turned from the worship of false ideas of God to a realization of the God of Love in their own hearts, Christ had to resurrect his physical body. It was a particular act to meet a particular need. I am not arguing that others have done or could do the same, but I would point out the logical fallacy of the opposite, the orthodox Christian argument, that therefore Jesus Christ is proved to be not only *an* incarnation of God, but *the only* incarnation of God.

This is not the place to go into this argument in detail, but one may point out that the conception of God is involved in it. I can find no funda-

mental difference between Jesus Christ's conception of God and Bhagavan Sri Maharshi's, but I find a very great difference between Christ's conception and that of the Christian Church, in which the Jehovah of the Old Testament is inextricably confused with the Inner Spirit, who is "within" every man, of the New Testament.

V

Finally with regard to the doctrine of grace, Christian criticism of Hindu theology asserts that Hinduism advocates "pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps" without assistance from the love of God. Such a statement is, in my opinion, unfair; but let us look at one of Christ's teachings—"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matthew, XIII, 12). In other words, "In accordance with each man's own efforts for spiritual enlightenment shall he be given assistance by God; and those who make no effort shall lose even what spiritual understanding they had." Surely this means that Divine Grace is dependent on effort; and what true Hindu, whether Shaivite or Vaishnavite, would deny such a teaching?

However, we are not concerned with a defence of "orthodox" Hinduism; in many respects it is farther from the truth than orthodox Christianity. But Bhagavan Sri Maharshi answers this riddle of self-help and grace in final fashion, in my view. In *Sat-Darshana Bhashya and Talks with Maharshi* we find:

"*Disciple*—Then I can dispense with outside help and by mine own effort get into the deeper truth by myself?

Maharshi—True. But the very fact you are possessed of the quest of the Self is a manifestation of the Divine Grace, அருள். It is effulgent in the Heart, the inner being, the Real Self. It draws you from within. You have to attempt to get in from without. Your attempt is *Vichara*, the deep inner movement is Grace, அருள். That is why I say there is no real *Vichara* without Grace, nor is there Grace active for him who is without *Vichara*. Both are necessary."

And there are several other similar examples in the same work and elsewhere in the Maharshi's writings.

VI

To remove the blinkers from men's eyes, to take away their spiritual crutches is a great, though painful, task. Men generally are unwilling to surrender their long-cherished illusions, whether based on nineteenth century materialism—still so widespread and, indeed, spreading in India—or on orthodox religion. It is painful and lonely to be told that you must strip your soul naked and depend only on yourself and the divine inner Grace—which Christ called the Holy Ghost—if you seek spiritual liberation; that no amount of prayers or saying '*credo*' can take the place of this lone pilgrimage.

Most men are unwilling to make, or rarely feel the need of making such a search. To them one can only say "Depart in peace." For such persons it is useless to visit Sri Maharshi's *ashram* for *darshan*, in the hope that this in itself will liberate one. That is only a beginning, an inspiration—the long, stony path lies ahead.

It is a tenet of Hinduism that all spiritual paths lead to the same goal. In a broad sense this is true, but also it hides the truth. For if one has followed one religion or another, one *yoga* or another, one has still in the end to go through the process of self-analysis, of inner search and surrender which is best described in our time by Sri Maharshi. In other words, the "goal" is not a goal but a path. When one has learnt everything that one can from one's inherited or acquired religion or spiritual discipline, he has to take this prized possession and cast it to one side—the most painful of acts—and, starting afresh, follow the simple, scientific method that the Saint of Arunachala teaches us.

VII

I have said that this saint is the greatest contemporary exponent of this age-old teaching. This is as true for the scientific-minded Western as it is for the Easterner. Elsewhere in this volume Dr. Jung, who is unquestionably the doyen of psychoanalysts, writes—"The identification of the Self with God will strike the European as shocking. It is a specifically oriental Realization, as expressed in Sri Ramana's utterances." No doubt such identification is shocking to the Western Christian or other orthodox religionist, but as I have implied, it is consonant with Christ's teachings, if they are approached afresh without prejudice.

If one examines the New Testament carefully one finds that Christ is trying to convince a fanatically monotheistic people—as monotheistic as

the Muslims are today—that God could inhabit human form for a special purpose, and that the nature of God was not something different from man's but that one could see the image of God in a perfect man. And He proclaimed himself to be a perfect being who had presided over human destiny since the world began. This in itself was an overwhelming dose for the orthodox Jew to swallow. One would not therefore expect that Christ would go on farther and show that this Perfect Being is latent in every man, because God is in every man. But in fact he does say this by implication, and sometimes directly, throughout his teaching. Take for instance—"The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke, XVII, 20 and 21.)[1] In other words His first lesson was, "Heaven is within you and it is a spiritual state, not a material place."

Having made this clear, He goes on to say, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matthew, V, 48). Thus He was saying in fact—"God dwells within you; you can become perfect like Him." This was revolutionary teaching, and its full implications are only understood if one comes into touch with the teachings of a Ramakrishna or a Sri Maharshi.

But Christ went even farther than this. In verses 33-36 of the tenth chapter of St. John's Gospel we read—"Jesus answered them (the Jews), Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods."

"If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the son of God."

So we might ask today, "Do you accuse Sri Maharshi of blasphemy for saying that the True Man within us is God; when Christ was executed on the same charge by part of the Jews 2,000 years ago?" Just because the Church has petrified His teaching, as Judaism before His time had petrified the teaching of the prophets, do you expect those who feel God stirring within them to join the mob who cry 'Blasphemy'?"

And to pursue this argument a little farther in order to reveal the basic similarity of Jesus Christ's and Bhagavan Maharshi's teachings, one remembers that Christ answered the rich, young man who came to Him and asked, "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life," by saying "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that

[1] The Authorized Version of the Bible is used in these quotations

is God." (Mark, X, 18). This, taken with the quotations already mentioned, clearly shows that He believed that God was in all men and that all men could attain the perfection that He, Christ, Himself revealed, through following His path—i.e. actively loving God and one's fellowmen, and knowing that the Kingdom of Heaven is within each one of us.

Finally, this view is reinforced by, "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew, X, 20). Could anything be clearer than this—that Christ wanted men to realize, as does Sri Maharshi, that God is not something apart from men to be worshipped and feared at a distance, but the only true reality in each man; and that man's work is to discard the false, imaginary ego which he has allowed to deceive him and so to separate him from his true Self, which is God. If that is blasphemy, then let us acknowledge ourselves, as Christ and His followers acknowledged themselves, to be blasphemers in the eyes of the world; for that way lies salvation.

गवेषणात्प्राप्य हृदन्तरं तत्पतेदहन्ता परिभुग्नशीर्षा।
अथाहमन्यत्स्फुरति प्रकृष्टं नाहङ्कृतिस्तत्परमेव पूर्णम्॥

On reaching the interior of the Heart through search,
The ego bows its head and falls.
Then shines forth the other I, the Self Supreme,
Which is not the ego, but verily the Perfect and Transcendental Being.[1]

But in addition to being in the true line of spiritual teaching—the line that extends back to Gautama the Buddha and Sri Mahavir, the tenth and greatest *Tirthankar* of the Jains, in one branch; and to Mohammed, Plotinus, Christ, Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras and Zoroaster in another—I believe Sri Maharshi to be the greatest living interpreter, and indeed, in a sense, the fulfilment of modern psychology and psycho-analysis and that therefore he must be taken seriously even by Western or Eastern materialists.

Dr. Jung recognizes this when he says, "The wisdom and mysticism of the East have, therefore, a very great deal to tell us, provided they speak in their own inimitable speech . . . . The life and teachings of Sri Ramana are not only important for the Indian but also for the Westerner. Not only do they form a record of great human interest, but also a warning message to a humanity which threatens to lose itself in the chaos of its unconsciousness and lack of self-control."

[1] *Sat-Darshana Bhashya*, Verse 30.

These words were written some time ago. How terrifyingly they ring in our ears today—in the ears of those who have to watch the bestiality and spiritual poverty of a world that has been through the purgatory of two world wars in scarcely more than a generation? And still rumours of war and revolution echo round the hollow shapes of bomb-blasted ruins.

Man is unquestionably at the cross-roads. He can choose the path of materialistic phantoms, seeking only better social and economic conditions, however desirable these may be in themselves, or he can turn his face towards the old light rising anew in the East, which, while by no means scorning improved conditions of life for the masses, seeks to direct man's inquisitive nature primarily towards the realization of his own being. Its aim is the same as Christ's—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you," which has been read weekly in countless churches every week for nineteen hundred years. But faithless, worldly-minded mankind has considered this to be merely a pleasant moral aphorism, not to be taken literally. Now men must take it literally or be prepared for further destruction, and indefinite chaos.

Today and for many years to come, one prays, this message in the peculiarly beautiful metaphor of Indian mysticism sings out from a small town with a huge temple in the heart of southern India, which somehow has preserved Indian thought and culture much more effectively than northern India. Not everyone can make a pilgrimage to this spot, hallowed for all time by the life of Sri Ramana Maharshi, but everyone can follow the Maharshi's precepts which are, in a strange way, ultra-modern in form. Even the Maharshi cannot convey permanent blessedness; that we alone through our own strivings can do. But he is a guide to be trusted absolutely, whether our background be Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Parsi, Jewish, Jain, Buddhist, Confucian, agnostic or rank materialist. Each will find what he needs; all essential questions are answered, if we have ears to hear. It is the path of the Razor's Edge we are called on to tread, but in fact, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

करोमि कर्मेति नरो विजानन्बाध्यो भवेत्कर्मफलं च भोक्तुम् ।
विचारधूता हृदि कर्तृता चेत्कर्मत्रयं नश्यति सैव मुक्तिः ॥

"He is bound to reap the fruit
Who is fixed in the I-do-thought.
The sense of doer lost by the search in the Heart,
Triple *karma* dies—and that is Liberation."

THE VEDANTIC TRADITION
IN
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

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(Ramakrishna Mission, Paris.)

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI represents the pure tradition in *Adwaita Vedanta.* In this article I propose to examine certain aspects of the life and teachings of Maharshi that have appealed to me as verifications of Vedantic truths.

In *Vedanta* there is a theistic as well as a non-theistic tradition, and these refer to two aspects of reality. The first treats of *Saguna Brahman* and the second treats of *Nirguna Brahman.* The *Bagavad Gita* says that the path of the Unconditioned, अव्यक्त is not for the aspirant who is still bound by the 'body-am-I'—idea, (Ch. 12, verse 5). Maharshi transcended the body-idea on the very day he made the investigation into the nature of the Self. His spiritual career is of particular interest to the student of *Vedanta*; for, an example like his is rare to find. He is one who has acceded to the realisation of the *Nirguna* ideal without passing through the preliminary stages of discipline where much importance is given to devotion and worship, सगुणोपासना. In history the most brilliant example of the same line of research and realisation that Maharshi undertook is that of Lord Buddha, though he had to spend long years of meditation before he had the Awakening. We are now above the prejudice handed down through ages where Buddhism and Vedanta in their essential spiritual appeal are placed one against the other in unrelenting opposition. We now consider Lord Buddha as one of the continuators of the Vedantic tradition of the Upanishads, where the non-theistic ideal was lived and practised.

To understand Maharshi we have to place him against the cultural background of Indian philosophical tradition, which finds its perfect expression in his life and realisation. That background of his life is the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*, particularly the *Mandukya* and the *Brihadaranyaka* studied in the light of the commentaries of Sri Shankaracharya and the *Karikas* of Sri Gaudapadacharya.

There are two Vedantic positions in conformity with two grades of seekers aspiring to know the One, Ultimate Reality; the less astute consider Brahman as *Saguna*, the other higher type consider it as *Nirguna*. The one is theological and the other is philosophical. The two stand points are not mutually exclusive; for the goal of the two methods is identical, namely, to bring the aspirant to the realisation of *Brahman*. It should be noted that if the theological position adopts the deductive form of enquiry, it is merely a question of emphasis on a particular aspect in the method of approach.

Brahman is posited as the first principle. There are two categories—*Brahman* and *Maya*. There is a severe and austere dialectic to establish the nature of *Maya*. *Brahman*, the Absolute, is beyond all 'relations', beyond the reach of all movements of thought. We have no dialectic of the Absolute, as they have it in the occident, where the Absolute is considered as possessing a thought content. According to the higher philosophical tradition of the East, *Brahman* is beyond the reach of thought, अवाङ्मानसगोचर. But in the philosophical method there is no necessity to take for granted untested universals like *Brahman* and *Maya*. Here all data of lived experience are looked into and examined to determine the truth in them. This method necessarily becomes inductive, and after a thorough analysis of experience a synthesis is arrived at. The goal of all philosophy, तत्वनिर्णय, is this synthesis of the totality of experience, " to know that by knowing which everything else is known." This synthesis which Vedanta arrives at should not be confounded with philosophical researches known to us as an intellectual game *Tatvajnana* surpasses the zone of intellect and leads one to a direct realisation of TRUTH, अपरोक्षानुभूति. As such the whole procedure becomes spiritual. As all branches of lived experience are enquired into, *Vedanta* takes into consideration the analysis of the states of waking, जाग्रत्, dream, स्वप्न, and sleep, सुषुप्ति, and their synthesis in तुरीय, the Supra-intellectual plane. The research starts from the sensible world of experience and merges in the Supra-sensible. When Maharshi made the first investigation "Who am I?", evidently he had not envisaged this particular technique or any other one. He had not then any theological education. Maharshi once told me that at that time he was not even familiar with such terms as *Brahman* or *Atman*. He had not the support of any of the accepted thesis on the subject. The enquiry was his own, and the way he discovered was equally his own. He discovered much later that he had come to the same conclusion that scriptures and the experience of others in the same line had arrived at from time immemorial.

He started from the sensible world with the analysis of a factor of experience that was not a mere hypothesis. It was a burning question to him; *the solution of the strongest emotion* of man,—the most fearful form of fear,—*the fear of Death*; and he solved it without leaning on any external aid. It may also be described as a 'suffering' of the most intense type, since Death is the anti-thesis of Life. This fear of death took possession of young Venkataramana all on a sudden. Any ordinary lad under similar circumstances would avoid the issues by changing the predominant thought or he would seek refuge in some kind of religious consolation. But Maharshi looked the fact of this fear squarely in the face! "To whom does this fear occur? What is this fear due to? It is due to imminent death. Death of what? Who is it that is dying? It is the physical body that is already stiff, it will be carried away presently for cremation. But this consciousness, this I-ness, with which I see the changing condition of the body losing its life, this "I" has remained totally unaffected." That, in short, is the direct means whereby young Venkataramana knew of the reality of an inner Being which witnessed not only the changing condition of the body seized by Death but also the unchanging condition of Consciousness which is necessarily self-conscious. It is this realisation that the *Gita* calls **क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानम्**, which, in its highest form as revealed to the Sage of Arunachala, is more than an intuitive flash.

To resume the subject of enquiry into the Truth. The Bhagavad-Gita begins by stating clearly a *dharma sankata*, a conflict touching one's very being, to kill or not to kill. When the conflict is real, one seeks its solution. To Maharshi the conflict *was real*. The unignorable fact of death was there. It must find a solution and that too immediately. Such a state is totally different from and has nothing to do with a theological enquiry. In a theological enquiry the aspirant has only to fit in his particular case with the conclusion the scriptures have already given. The *jijnasu* is not satisfied with the dicta of the scriptures. He seeks an understanding which can be related to his experience. Since Maharshi's knowledge, when confronted with Death, was based on his experience, he was more than a *jijnasu*. Even of the *jijnasu* the Gita says **जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते**, the enquirer after *Yoga* rises superior to the performer of Vedic actions, (Ch. VI, verse 44). In fact, young Vekataramana stood on the threshold of Realisation no sooner than he survived the Death-experience. He had no need for either the *karma kanda* of the Vedas or for *Yogabhyasa* involving the practice of years of self-discipline.

Let us look more deeply into the conflict of young Venkataramana that made him take up the challenge of DEATH. As I said it was the fear of

imminent death that provoked the conflict in him. Maharshi became the critic of his own experience. He did not avoid the issues; rather, he lived fully that Death-experience. Ordinary beings are unable to analyse their experiences, much less a conflict, for they do not fully understand nor do they live intelligently their experiences of life. The plentitude of an experience can be known when one becomes a competent spectator of it. Even in our ordinary limited experiences of joys and sufferings in life, our self goes so much in our acts that a disinterested outlook becomes impossible. We screen truth by our hopes and fears, by our desires and disappointments. From a single moment properly lived, says the poet, a whole eternity can be known. Maharshi lived fully the moment of his Death-experience. And he became at one stroke a **तत्त्वज्ञानि**, a Knower of TRUTH.

A philosophy becomes dry and insipid when it does not solve this vital problem of death and suffering. Philosophy when it deals with concepts and percepts, that have no real bearing on life, gives stones when one asks for bread! An interest in philosophical enquiry commences the very moment when a datum of experience is placed in relief as a specimen for analysis, and an attempt is made to *know what it is*. Very often all that we pass through as routine experiences do not affect us; for they do not stay in our memory as possessing any particular value. Only an outstanding event serves a notice, as it were, on " attention " and makes it alert; for it surpasses the norm of our usual identification with experience, and thus helps it by its very intensity, to be projected as a factor for observation which cannot be done, so long as we are identified with it. Nothing can give us more forcibly this invitation for observation than suffering when it is really ours and not a feigned one. Of the three types of suffering **तापत्रय**, that which is of the physical order—**आधिभौतिक**, can be attended to more easily than the two others **आधिदैविक** and **आध्यात्मिक**. These sufferings born of our subtle nature, the mental and spiritual, cannot be easily quelled. In physical suffering there is more possibility for observation and hence a greater chance of relief being administered. In the other two kinds of **दुःख** the difficulty of dispassionate observation is complicated by the series of false identifications, **अध्यास**, that we ourselves have woven over our nature. We are caught up in the meshes of **राग** (attraction) and **द्वेष** (repulsion), and consequently we do not live an experience completely which, as I have already said, is the *complete separation of the factor of observation, the observed, from the Observer*. The moment this is achieved the answer is found.

This separation has been so charmingly described in the *Bhagavad Gita* as one of the functions of *Yoga*: "Let that be known as the state called by the name of *Yoga*, a state of severance from contact with pain," तं विद्याद्दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् (Ch. VI, verse 23). Our identification, अभ्यास, with every successive moment of experience does not permit us to make the experiment of isolating the Spectator from the spectacle. And when a crucial moment comes, when this identification is challenged by nature through suffering, we get alarmed and desperate. In Chapter XIII of the *Bhagavad Gita* Lord Krishna gives us the proper technique to undo this junction of the Spectator and the spectacle. The Lord speaks to us of क्षेत्र (the field) and the क्षेत्रज्ञ (the Knower of the field). He says in verse 3, "The knowledge of *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* is considered by Me to be *the* Knowledge," क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥ The same technique of distinguishing of Spectator and the spectacle is also known as *Drg-drsya-viveka*, दृग्दृश्यविवेक.

Later on in life, when Maharshi came into contact with such classical texts as the *Drg-drsya-viveka*, he instinctively found there a family-likeness to a psychological or rather trans-psychological way that he himself has followed. As Maharshi plunged into the depths of his soul during his analysis of "Who am I?" he got beyond the plane of doubts; for he had transcended the limitations set by the intellectualizing character of mind that never permits that disjunction with the *nama-rupa* complex which is the field of empirical experience. His method has much in common with that of Lord Buddha. When Malukya asked Buddha questions that did not touch the vital issue involved—that of suffering—the latter replied that one pierced by an arrow would be interested only in plucking it out and not in discussing of what substance the arrow was made, whether it had a poisoned tip or not, etc.

Maharshi put his whole being, while controlling breath and vital forces, into the trans-psychological investigation he fearlessly undertook when confronted by death, thus realising another aspect of *Yoga* described by the *Gita*, सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे । आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुह्वति ज्ञानदीपिते ॥ "Some other Yogis let consume all the functions of the senses, breath and vital forces in the fire of self-control set ablaze by Jnana." (Ch. IV, 27). His whole being entered into perfect concentration as he analysed himself. He did not stop midway in the enquiry. The metaphysical reality he attained allowed his *buddhi* to be drawn out of the slough of

sankalpa and *vikalpa* (the image-making faculty of the mind) and enabled him to realise another definition of *Yoga* in the *Gita* :—" Evenness of mind is known as Yoga," समत्वं योग उच्यते—(Ch. II, 48). The conscious principle underlying thought joined to a volition that precipitated immediate investigation gave him the full blossoming of the cognitive faculty, the way of *Buddhi Yoga*—all three operating in one single flash. He became a *Sthitaprajna*, the possessor of steady Wisdom, and in the words of the *Gita* " having obtained which, regards no other acquisition superior to that, and where established he is not moved even by the greatest sorrow "—(Ch. VI, 22) :—

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।
यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥

One does not find in Maharshi that type of *Bhakti* associated with devotional forms ; but it can be said that if the way of *Bhakti* brings one to an expression of bounty and love towards all, ***he is that.*** His very nature (स्वरूप and स्वभाव) becomes imbued with love, प्रेम. I should not omit here to mention a scene that I myself witnessed. At my request he recited certain lines from the composition of the Saint Manikyavachakar, where the author spoke of the condition of the soul melted in love ; hardly had the Maharshi pronounced a few lines when there was a brilliance in his face. He who rarely expresses in any outward form his inner emotion could not restrain a few silent tears. A slanting ray of the morning sun from the hillside made the scene still more vivid. A peace that passeth all understanding pervaded the whole atmosphere. For more than an hour there was perfect silence. It looked as if one of the fresco paintings of Ajanta had come to life! When the atmosphere was disturbed by a new visitor, I repeated before him, as a parallel to the verse from Manikyavachakar, the following lines from Wordsworth :

His spirit drank the spectacle,
Sensation, soul and form all melted into him ; they swallowed up
His animal being, in them did he live,
And by them did he live ; they were his life
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired.
Rapt in still communion, that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him ; it was blessedness and love !

(***Excursion—Wanderer***)

6

Maharshi followed very appreciatively this selection from Wordsworth and remarked to me in Malayalam—"How nicely they too have expressed these same high sentiments." I made then the remark that Thayumanavar, Ramalingaswami and Manikyavachakar were all saints. Wordsworth, like other poets of the Romantic Period, cannot be classed as a saint. These poets had occasional intuitions of the supra-sensible reality, they were neither *Jnanis* nor *Jivanmuktas*.

II

Maharshi told me that what he realised on the first day when he made the maiden *vichara*, has ever remained with him. It has neither increased nor decreased. When I asked him why he came all the way to Tiruvannamalai and why he underwent so many hardships, which we would characterize as *sadhana*, he only waved his hand, implying "I do not know why all that happened." Our inquiring minds want explanations, and are easily satisfied with some such fiction as Destiny or *Prarabdha*, which do not exist for the *Jnani*. For it is said the *karmas* of a person who realises *Brhmajnana* are all dissolved at one stroke. From the point of view of Maharshi it must be so.

To us who follow *Vedanta* the highest aspect of Maharshi's Realisation is revealed in his great message of Silence. It is not that he remains without speaking a word, as he did for some years. He is now more communicative. But with regard to the things of life his attitude is best described in the words of the *Gita* :—

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥

"When thy Buddhi crosses beyond the taint of illusion, then shalt thou attain to indifference regarding things heard and things worth to be heard."—(Ch. II, 52). आत्मन्येवात्मनातुष्टः, one who is satisfied in the Self by the Self (Ch. II, 52); यतात्मा the self-controlled one (Ch. XII, 14); दृढनिश्चयः one with firm determination (Ch. XII, 14); अनपेक्षः, the desireless one (Ch.XII, 16); सर्वारम्भपरित्यागि, one who has renounced all enterprise (Ch XII 16); सन्तुष्टो येनकेनचित्, content with anything (Ch. XII, 19); उदासीनवदासीनः, sitting like one unconcerned (Ch. XIV, 23), and many such charming phrases of the *Gita* give a word-picture of Maharshi. In still more powerful language

the following verses of the *Gita* give to the reader an insight into the transcendental State the Sage has realised :—

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च संतुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥
योऽन्तःसुखोऽन्तरारामस्तथान्तर्ज्योतिरेव यः ।
स योगी ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं ब्रह्मभूतोऽधिगच्छति ॥

"The man who revels here and now in the Self alone, with the Self is satisfied, and in the Self alone is content,—for him there is no work which he must do." (Ch. III, 17): "He who is inwardly happy, revels within and who likewise becomes the Light within, that *Yogi* becomes the Brahman and realises the transcendental Bliss of the Brahman." (Ch. V, 24).

What impressed me most in reading the characteristics of the *Jivanmukta* in *Viveka-Chudamani* were the lines—"He has his mind merged in Brahman; nevertheless he is quite alert, but free from the characteristics of the waking state"—लीनधीरपि जागर्ति जाग्रद्धर्मविवर्जितः (verse 429). In remaining a few days with Maharshi, these lines of *Viveka-chudamani* often came to my mind. To all outward appearance Maharshi very often looked as if he were unconscious; but his mind is ever in such a state of concentration that even during the moments when he appeared to be inert he knew all that was passing on in the hall; in repeating verses from *Ribhu Gita,* old Tenamma made a certain error in pronunciation. Opening his eyes he gently corrected her. In *Drg-drsya-Viveka,* in verse 30, there is a fine account of the concentration of a man of realisation.

देहाभिमाने गलिते विज्ञाते परमात्मनि ।
यत्र यत्र मनो याति तत्र तत्र समाधयः ॥

"With the disappearance of attachment to the body and with the realisation of the Supreme SELF, to whatever object the mind is directed one experiences *Samadhi.*"

How a metaphysical experience of unity can be presented through a psychological mode where the essential characteristic of the psyche is *sankalpa* and *vikalpa,* the very opposite that produces the unitary consciousness, defies all empirical explanation. For our explanations the data of investigation is only the findings of the waking state; whereas to an enlightened man the field of research is vaster. It is all-inclusive as it

englobes the experience of the waking state, plus that of the dream and sleep states. The *Sthitaprajna* realises the non-dual Brahman in each aspect of manifestation, not in the way a layman sees the world as fragmented units, but as one expression of the same Reality that comes to us through the experience of the waking, dream and sleep states. Even to use the term 'aspects of Reality' with respect to a *Jivanmukta's* vision of the world is a misnomer. To him the Reality ever *IS* and never gets conditioned into aspects, which is a feature of *avidya.*

To understand this spiritual outlook of a person like Maharshi, I cannot do better than quote the commentary of Sankara on the 89th *karika* of the 4th chapter of *Mandukya karikas.*

"The word ज्ञान signifies knowledge by which one grasps the significance of the three states. The word ज्ञेय or knowable signifies the three states which should be known. The first knowable consists of the gross state of empirical experience. Then comes the state of subtle experience, in which the first state loses itself; that is, merges. And the last comes deep sleep which is beyond all empirical experience (gross or subtle) which results in the absence of the two previous states, that is, in which the two previous states merge. By the knowledge of these three, one after the other, and consequently by the negation of the three states the TURIYA, non-dual, birthless and fearless, which alone is the Supreme Reality, is realised. Thus the knower possessed of the greatest power of discrimination attains in this very life the state of omniscience, which is identical with the knowledge of the Self. He is called MAHADHI or the man of the highest intellect, as he has understood that which transcends all human experiences. His omniscience is constant and remains undiminished. For the knowledge of the SELF once realised remains for ever. This is because the knowledge of the knower of the Supreme Reality does not appear and disappear like that of mere disputants."

In these lines Sankara expounds in a very clear manner the full implications of what I described in the beginning as the non-theistic or extra-religious tradition in *Vedanta* of which Maharshi is a worthy representative. In India when we speak of this tradition we do not oppose it to the theistic or religious tradition. In Europe any one expounding such a theory will be more often considered an atheist! For it is very difficult for a European, with his Judaical-Christian theology as the background of his spiritual culture, to admit or conceive of spiritual life

without the idea of God. Whenever I speak to Christian audience in Europe, I have to tell them how a highly spiritual life can be conceived of as in the Buddhistic and Adwaita Vedantic traditions without even conceding to the necessity of positing the idea of God. This is at first very startling and very uncomfortable to the theologically minded. They then think in terms of the possibility of a "*mysticisme naturel*" as opposed to a "*mysticisme surnaturel.*" A concession to study the subject under this perspective is only a recent advance in their spirit of generosity or, perhaps, of a scientific outlook towards the metaphysical reality. It is only after the visit of Prof. Lacombe, the author of *L'Absolue selon Vedanta*, (the first serious study made in France to understand from close quarters the philosophy of Sankara and Ramanuja) to Tiruvannamalai and his contact with Maharshi that we can now note a change in the outlook of one of France's world-reputed thinkers and theologians, Mon. Jacques Maritain. In an article contributed to that well-known Catholic magazine "Les Etudes Carmelitaines"[1] in 1938, Maritain has taken a sympathetic position. Influenced by Mon. Lacombe and taking an objective view of the question, he recommends to his Catholic friends a study of that experience of the SELF where all religious implications are absent.

III

The philosophical outlook of Maharshi tends very often to be confused with that of solipsism or its Indian equivalent, ***drishti-srishti-vada,*** which is a sort of degenerated idealism. That Maharshi never subscribes to that view can be known if we study his works in the light of orthodox *Vedanta* or observe his behaviour in life. When he says that it is the mind that has projected this universe, the term 'mind' should be understood in the Vedantic sense in which it is used. Unfortunately I have no books by Maharshi or works on him with me here for reference as all of them have disappeared when our library was looted during German occupation. What I write has necessarily to depend on my memory-impressions. The term 'mind' is also used by Sankara and Gaudapada in a wider sense than we are accustomed to use it in, as an ***antahkarana vritti.*** In certain places in the ***bhashyas*** of Sankara and the ***Karikas***, the pure 'mind' is equated with ***Atman.*** For example, let us take verse 170 in *Viveka Chudamani*:—"In dream when there is no actual contact with

[1] To those who have not seen that French magazine, I would like to point out that on the elegant jacket of the journal had figured the picture of Maharshi in the midst of two Catholic saints.

the external world the mind alone creates the whole universe consisting of the enjoyer, the objects etc. And similarly in the waking state also there is no difference. Therefore, all this phenomenal universe is the projection of mind."

If the 'mind' used here is taken as identical with *antahkarana vritti*, *Vedanta* will necessarily be classed as solipsism! To understand the larger sense in which 'mind' is used in many such contexts we have to read the *Mandukya karika*. For example, take verse 29 in Ch. III.

"As in dream the mind acts through *Maya* presenting the appearance of duality, so also in the waking state the mind acts through *Maya* presenting the appearance of duality."

Sankara in his commentary makes the sense more explicit. Let us quote that.

"How is it possible for Reality to pass into birth through *Maya*? It is thus replied; as the snake imagined in the rope is identical with the being of the rope when seen as the rope, so also the mind from the standpoint of knowledge of the ultimate reality *is seen to be identical with Atman*. (The italics are ours.) The mind in dream appears to us as dual in the forms of the cognizer and the cognized through *Maya* as the snake appears to be other than a rope through ignorance. Similarly the mind acts in a dual form in the waking state also through *Maya*. That is to say the mind appears to act." (We have to note also that in this connection Sankara uses the term *Maya*, instead of *Avidya*; in our Vedantic theology, *Avidya* has more or less a reference to the individual; and when the term *Maya* is used it signifies the totality of the manifested universe. This is another indication that there is no scope for stigmatising the term 'mind' as having a solipsist significance.)

Again in Ch. IV, commenting on *Karika* 54, Sankara says:—

"Thus for reasons already stated the mind is verily of the essence of the SELF. External objects are not caused by the mind, nor is the mind the product of external objects. That is because all (external) entities are mere appearances in Consciousness. Thus neither the so-called effect comes from the (so-called) cause nor the cause from the effect. In this way is reiterated the absolute non-evolution of causality. In other words the knowers of *Brahman* declare the absence of causality with regard to *Atman*."

Again in verse 64 of IV chapter in the commentary Sankara says :—

"These objects perceived by the mind of the dreamer have no existence outside the mind of the person who dreams about them. It is the mind alone which assumes the form of many diversified objects. Similarly the mind of the dreamer is perceived by the dreamer alone. Therefore there is no separate thing called mind which is apart from the dreamer himself." (Swami Nikhilananda in his notes makes the point still clearer. He writes "The mind of a man is not perceived by any other being but himself. The perceiving ego is also created by the mind. The ego and the non-ego come into existence together. Therefore the charge of solipsism cannot be levelled against *Vedanta*.") Sankara and Gaudapada use in many places the term 'mind' thus as an equivalent of *Atman*. In the commentary on *Karika* 35, chapter III, Sankara again reiterates the same idea: "When the mind becomes free from all ideas of the perceiver and the perceived the dual evils caused by ignorance, it verily becomes one with the Supreme and non-dual *Brahman*."

IV

Gaudapada and Sankara speak highly of the necessity of *sadhana* for one who is a candidate for the highest knowledge. The lines "*Na-nirodho, nachonnati*" etc. are not spoken with reference to the *sadhakas*. To those who make efforts in spiritual life the advice they give in (*Karika* 41, Ch. III) is very interesting.

"The mind can be brought under control only by an unrelenting effort like that which is required to empty an ocean, drop by drop, with the help of a blade of *kusha* grass"—41.

The purpose of this *Karika* is to impress on the aspirant the immensity of the task he has undertaken, the task of transforming the *jeeva bhava* into *Brahma Swaroopa*. But he need not feel on reading this *Karika* that he is embarking on a hopeless adventure. We find in the life and realisation of Maharshi the fullest confirmation of the fact that the Truth Eternal is an attainable reality, and it is none other than the Self, the core of one's own being. Maharshi declares that Realisation is not only possible but is the easiest thing to achieve, provided one has the right understanding and the true spirit of dedication. *Karikas* 42, 43 and 44 offer valuable hints to the aspirant, which are similar to what

he finds in 'The Talks' in *Sat-Darshana Bhashya.* (*Vide* also *Maharshi's Gospel* Books I and II.) The Karikas referred to above are as follows:—

"The mind distracted by desires and enjoyments, as also the mind enjoying pleasure in oblivion (trance-like condition), should be brought under discipline by the pursuit of proper means, for the state of oblivion is as harmful as desires."—42

"The mind should be turned back from the enjoyment of pleasures; remember that all this is attended with sorrow. If it be remembered that everything is the unborn *Brahman,* the born (duality) will not be seen."—43

"If the mind becomes inactive in a state of oblivion, awaken it again. If it is distracted, bring it back to the state of tranquillity. (In the intermediate state) know the mind containing within it desires in a potential form. If the mind has attained to the state of equilibrium, then do not disturb it again."—44.

It will not be out of place to quote in detail the commentary to the 43rd *Karika.*—

"What is the way of disciplining the mind? It is thus replied. Remember that all duality is caused by *Avidya* or illusion, and therefore afflicted with misery. Thereby dissuade the mind from seeking enjoyments produced by desires. In other words, withdraw the mind from all dual objects by impressing upon it the idea of complete non-attachment. Realise from the teaching of the scriptures and *Acharyas* that *all this verily is the changeless Brahman.* (The italics are ours.) Then you will not see anything to the contrary, that is, duality, for it does not exist."

It must be noted on passing that the mind that is referred to here is the individual mind which the *sadhaka* is to control.

A conversation I had with Maharshi about the way to interpret the 33rd verse of the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita,* brings out his attitude towards *sadhana* in a very clear manner. There the Lord says: "Even a wise man acts in accordance with his own nature; beings follow nature; what can restraint do?" Apparently this verse is very disheartening. Maharshi in explaining this verse made a distinction between knowledge and *Jnana.* Bare knowledge as an intellectual attainment will not change character. That may give a lot of 'information' but will not

bring about any 'transformation'; without aiming at this transformation, if one dares to confront nature, conserving all the animal appetites that flesh is heir to, that will be catastrophic for the *sadhaka*. The Lord has said in verse 14 of the seventh chapter, "Verily, this divine illusion of MINE, constituted by the *gunas* is difficult to cross over."

Maharshi then explained that nature has two aspects and each stage has its laws. The lower is described in verse 34 of the same chapter immediately after the note of despair struck in verse 33. Here the Lord describes one of the laws that govern the lower nature. "Attachment and aversion of the senses for their respective objects are natural;" and for *sadhakas* the warning is forcibly given, "Let none come under their sway; they are his foes." *Jnana* is the realisation that takes one to the higher plane of nature. There I asked him whether it will be appropriate to describe its functioning along the lines of the *Gita*, **वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः**--(At the end of many births, the man of wisdom takes refuge in ME, *realising that all this is Vasudeva*—the innermost SELF—very rare is that great soul.) Maharshi unhesitatingly said that that is the truth. I then told him how Mr. V. Subrahmanya Iyer of Mysore often told me that without the explanation of this *sarvam* no philosophy can be valid. The life of Maharshi amply illustrates that he lives the full significance of this philosophy of Totality: in him belief and behaviour are at-one-ment. The interpretation of '*sarvam*' of the Gita in Maharshi is through his moral outlook and conduct; and this moral appeal of Maharshi is the greatest encouragement to all those who desire to follow the spiritual path along this particular tradition, of which he is the living custodian. This moral appeal again is the fruit of his metaphysical realisation. Morality and conduct in *Vedanta* are inseparable from metaphysics.

We often hear it said that many of the devotees of Maharshi saw him in the state of ecstasy. I do not contradict their interpretation of Maharshi as they saw him. I would like here only to give a certain Vedantic background to his attainment of *Sahajasthiti* which I think should not be interpreted in terms of ecstasy. Ecstasy is a religious experience. The *anubhava* of *Sahajasthiti* is, on the other hand, metaphysical. Ecstasy is attained in the spiritual union with the Godhead. Union is possible when a difference is conceded between the units that afterwards enter into relation. But *Sahajasthiti* is the state natural to the SELF when all the superimpositions are thrown away, that is, in the

language of the Gita when one becomes "satisfied in the SELF alone by the SELF"—आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः verse 55, Ch. II. Meister Eckhart in another language expresses the same conception thus:—"For if you want the kernel you must break the shell, and therefore if you want to discover nature's nakedness, *you must destroy its symbols.*" (The italics are ours.)

Let us see what Sankara has to say with regard to this topic. In the case of a *Jnani* the text "he is merged in Brahman," as in the *mantra* in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, should be interpreted, according to Sankara, in a figurative sense. Sankara, in commenting on the passage, concludes by saying, "Therefore the *Atman* by itself has no difference due to bondage or liberation, knowledge or ignorance; for it is admitted to be always the same and homogeneous by nature. Those who consider the reality of the Self to be different, reduce the scriptures dealing with bondage and liberation to mere plausible statements, would dare to find the foot-prints of birds in the sky to pull it with their clenched hands. . . . . But we can do no such thing. We hold that it is the definite conclusion of the *Upanishads* that we are nothing but the *Atman*, the *Brahman* that is always the same, homogeneous, one without a second unchanging, birthless, undecaying, immortal, deathless and free from fear. Therefore the statement 'He is merged in *Brahman*'—(this text)—*is but a figurative one,*—(the italics are ours)—meaning the cessation, as a result of Knowledge, of the continuous chain of bodies for one who has held an opposite view."[1] Again[2] it is stated as follows:—"The Knowledge of *Brahman* too means only the cessation of the identification with extraneous things (such as body). The relation of identity with it has not to be established, for it is already there. Everybody has that identity with IT, for the scriptures do not enjoin that identity with *Brahman* should be established, but that the false identification with things other than THAT should stop. *When the identification with other things is gone, the natural identity with one's own SELF becomes isolated.* This is expressed by the statement that the SELF is known. In ITSELF, IT is unknowable—not comprehended through any means."

From the above statements we should understand that the state of *Sahajasthiti* or *Kaivalya* cannot be equated with the union attained in any particular mystic condition. Whatever may be the mystic value of

[1] Page 726, translated by Swami Madhavananda, Mayavati, 1934 Edn.

[2] *Vide* Page 746.

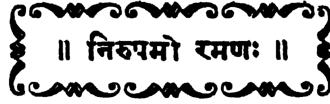
these transcendental states described in the ecstasies, a *Jnani*,—not denying of course the possibilities of these states—remains completely detached from them; for he knows that every भाव or mode of experience, material or mystic, is the same manifestation of *Atman*, and in every aspect of manifestation it is the same *Brahman* in action. His mind does not yearn for any special kind of experience. He has nothing to achieve nor has he anything to be achieved through others.[1] He is the person in whom there will be no tendency at all to proselytise. He has no mission to achieve. According to Sankara in the *Nirvanashtaka* he alone can say "I have no death nor fear, no distinction of rank or class. I have no father, no mother, no friend, no master nor disciple, I am Absolute Knowledge and Bliss. I am the ALL-PERVADING SELF, I am the ALL-PERVADING SELF"—शिवानंदरूपः शिवोऽहं शिवोहम्

In the presence of Maharshi this verily is the impression that a seeker of the Vedantic Tradition gets.

He is amongst us. We offer him our salutations.



[1] *Vide Gita* text Ch. III, 17 quoted above.



THE INCOMPARABLE RAMANA

निगमावलिशिखरेशयविनिवेशितचित्तं कुसुमायुधभृशवैभवपरितर्जनशक्तम् ।
निजसत्कृतिगणदूरितजनमानसमोहं भजदुत्तमनिखिलेष्टदमतिमानसमूहम् ॥ १ ॥

1. *For ever I bow to Him Who is God-incarnate and Who is known to the world as Sri Ramana,*[1] on Whom the foremost of the learned in the Upanishads have fixed their minds, Who by His strength has completely annihilated the might of Cupid, Who shakes off the illusion affecting people's minds by dint of the multitude of His blessings—the giver of everything desired to the best of His devotees, Who is beyond all attributes;

मृदुभाषणपरिभावितकलशांबुधिसारं सुदरीकृतवसतिं गलल्लसितामलहारम् ।
शिशुतागतगुरुतायुजमरविन्ददलाक्षमशुभापहवरतारकमनुमन्त्रणदीक्षम् ॥ २ ॥

2. Whose sayings, sweet and succinct, contain the essence of the milky ocean of wisdom, Who made a sacred cave His abode, Who from boyhood was endowed with the profound Knowledge of a *Guru*, Whose eyes are like the petals of a lotus, Who effectively initiates by the great *Pranava Mantra* (Silence) that wards off all evil;

जितमानसमतिमानुषमुपमानविहीनं श्रुतिपारगनुतमामयगणहृन्महिमानम् ।
धरणीकृतसुकृतव्रजपरिपाकशरीरं रमणीगणविरतान्तरमभिराममुदारम् ॥ ३ ॥

3. Who has conquered the mind and is a Superman beyond all comparison, Who is extolled by masters in Vedanta, Whose effulgence destroys all disease, Whose advent is due to the fructification of the merits of Mother Earth, Whose mind is turned away from women, Who is beatific and noble;

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[1] The first nine *slokas* constitute one sentence, the principal clause of which is in the last *sloka*. For easy understanding, that main clause is brought into the translation of the first verse and is therefore put in distinctive type. The same clause slightly abridged is put in the last verse also, and in distinctive type, to show that the two main clauses refer only to one and the same clause in the original.

प्रभवाभवविदमाशुगविनिरोधनवन्तं शुभवासनमभवाय च भृशमुद्यमवन्तम् ।
परवादिसमदवारणविनिवारणसिंहं नरकावहकलुषापहसुगुणालिमजिह्मम् ॥ ४ ॥

4. Who knows the course of creation (of the universe) and its dissolution, Who has achieved absolute control of *Prana*, Whose nature is auspicious, Who is resolutely engaged in liberating others, Who is powerful like a lion in overcoming the proud opponents of the religion of Reality, Whose noble qualities destroy sins leading to hell, Who is straightforward;

ममतात्यजममलाशयपरिशाम्यदहन्तं सुमनोरमभुजलालितवरदण्डयुतं तम् ।
अतिमात्रकृतपसाश्रितगिरिराजसुतेशं मतिनिर्जितसुरनायकगुरुमस्तमिताशम् ॥ ५॥

5. Who has renounced all sense of possession, Whose ego is lost in Pure Consciousness, Who gently carries a fine stick in His exquisitely beautiful hand, Who, by virtue of His extraordinary austerities, has dedicated himself to the Lord of Parvati, Who by His intelligence excels Brihaspati, the Preceptor of gods, in Whom all desires are set at rest;

भसितामलनिटिलादिमसकलावयवौघं हसितद्युतिपरिभर्त्सितहरिणाङ्कमयूखम् ।
स्वकरार्पिततृणखादनपरिपोषभृदेणं कररञ्जितकरकं यतिसमुदायधुरीणम् ॥ ६ ॥

6. Whose bright forehead and body are besmeared with sacred ashes, the radiance of Whose smile surpasses the beauty of moonlight, Who himself feeds the antelopes with handfuls of grass, Who holds a beautiful gourd कमण्डलु and Who is the Leader of a host of ascetics;

क्षमयाजितवसुधं शुचियशसं यतिदेवं समदर्शनपरिदर्शितनिजसत्तमभावम् ।
वरसुन्दरजननान्तरसुतपःफलभूतं मरणोद्भवभवसाध्वसघनवारकवातम् ॥ ७ ॥

7. Who by His forbearance surpasses Mother Earth, of sacred glory, the God of ascetics, Who has proved His excellence by His vision of equality, Who is the fruition of the austerity of the great man, Sundara[1] in his previous births, Who is the mighty wind dispelling the cloud of fear of *samsara*—the endless recurrence of birth and death;

[1] Father of Sri Ramana.

॥ निरुपमो रमणः ॥

करुणारसवरुणालयमतिमानमसङ्गं तरुणाकृतिमकृतात्मदुरवलोकनिजाङ्गम् ।
जितमायकसुकृतिव्रजवृतमैश्वरमूर्तिं मितभोजनमवलोकनहृतभक्तजनार्तिम् ॥ ८ ॥

8. Who is the Ocean of the Nectar of Grace, Who is incomprehensible, unattached, ever youthful, Whose Form is invisible to the unregenerate, Who is surrounded by the blessed ones who have vanquished delusion, Who is abstemious, and Who by a single glance of His removes the afflictions of His devotees;

शरणागतभरणादरमरुणाचलवासं तरुणारुणकिरणावलिजयपण्डितभासम् ।
भवसागरतरणावहचरणांबुजपोतं प्रणमाम्यहमसकृद्भुवि रमणाह्वयमेतम् ॥ ९ ॥

9. Who is intent on supporting those who seek refuge in Him, Who abides in Arunachala, Whose splendour of Self-Knowledge dazzles the rays of the brilliant sun, and Whose Lotus-feet serve as the boat to cross the ocean of *samsara, — to that God-incarnate Sri Ramana, I bow for ever.*

के. आर्. विश्वनाथशास्त्रिविरचितम् —*K. R. Visvanatha Sastri*



॥ ब्रह्मर्षी रमणः ॥

यन्नामस्मरणं स्मृतिञ्जनयति प्रच्यावयद्विस्मृतिं
यल्लीलावचनं वचो जनयति प्रज्ञावदत्यादृतम् ।
यत्सान्निध्यगतिर्गतिं कलयति स्वाराज्यसिद्ध्यादिकां
यद्दृष्टिस्समदर्शितां वितनुते तं न स्तुवीतेह कः ॥

Who on earth would not praise Him, Whose Name remembered removes forgetfulness and confers remembrance of Self, Whose spontaneous utterances inspire in one words highly respected and full of wisdom, approach to Whose Presence bestows sovereignty over the self and other attainments, and Whose look leads one to the Vision of Equality.

इत्थं सुन्दरनन्दनोऽरुणनगस्कन्दाश्रमं भूषयन्
शिष्याणां सरलोक्तिभिर्दृढतमो भिन्दन्नमन्दप्रभः ।
विन्दन्श्रीरमणर्षिनाम च महानन्दाब्धिमग्नाशयो
ब्रह्मर्षिस्स विराजतेऽखिलनुतो लोकस्य सौभाग्यतः ॥

By the good luck of the world thus shines the Brahmarishi, known as Sri Ramana, praised by all, Who was born of Sundara, Who adorned the Skandasrama on Arunachala, Who, being the Effulgence Himself, utterly destroys the massive ignorance of His disciples by His simple, direct utterances, and Who remains ever immersed in the Ocean of Supreme Bliss.

के. आर्. विश्वनाथशास्त्रिविरचितम्

—*K. R. Viswanatha Sastri*

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA
AND
THE MODERN AGE

BY

B. Sanjiva Rao, B.A. (Cantab), I.E.S., (Retired)

The profoundest need of the human spirit is the desire to know. Beyond the need for food, clothing, shelter, is the urge of the soul to seek for Self-knowledge. All human effort is that; all art, all literature, all science, has but one purpose, the gaining of knowledge. Man in his struggle to understand the world around him, the world of men and things, is dimly conscious of a faculty within him, which is not content with anything less than knowing and seeing that world as an inalienable part of himself. The mystic seeks a knowledge which enables him to see God as the Principle of Unity in all things. The artist and poet seeks the same knowledge by the apprehension of Beauty in all things, while the scientist seeks to discover the hidden law of being, the innermost Truth of all things. The entire sum of human effort has had this primal urge to knowledge. Towards the satisfaction of this urge, men and women have sacrificed the fundamental and primary needs of the physical and vital, and, in some cases, even life itself. The highest impulse in man, the supreme urge, which can never be suppressed is this desire for Self-knowledge. For all knowledge is ultimately Self-knowledge. To the illumined Sage, there is neither an outer world nor an inner world, and the world of Reality is but himself, an inalienable part of his own being.

The satisfaction of this urge towards the discovery of Truth, of Beauty, of Love, is the highest happiness of man. Because the secret core of his being is Eternal joy, he is ever seeking for happiness. All his efforts are directed towards the attainment of this goal. Even the satisfaction of the most transient pleasures of the senses, is due to the possession of an instinctive knowledge of the fundamentally blissful nature of the Self. But there are other needs besides the need for pleasure. Is not man fighting for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity? Is not the entire political and social history of man but a record of his struggles for the achieve-

ment of these fundamental rights? Men have given up all the things that they value most, sacrificed life itself in their struggle for these primary things of life. Because man in his innermost being is free, he fights against domination by his environment or by his fellow human beings. Because the Divine is in everything, he asserts equality as the fundamental principle of every rightly ordered society. Because there is the principle of unity in all things, he seeks to impose the ideal of Brotherhood as the underlying principle of all human relationships. Because the Kingdom of God exists within Himself, man constantly seeks to establish that Kingdom in the outer world.

This is the original wisdom which is implicit in every individual life; every child of man shares in this heritage of the soul. But there is also an original *Ajnana* characteristic of all self-conscious existence which is the cause of all sorrow. Buddha declared that 'self-conscious' existence is sorrow. The Christian believes in an original sin which has brought about the fall of man. When from an original unconsciousness man developed a self-conscious individuality, he lost his innocence and gained a knowledge of good and evil. Good and evil exist only in the mind of the man who suffers from this *Ajnana*. The innocent child does not know good and evil, neither does the perfected *Jnani*. What is this *Ajnana*, this original sin, which is the root-cause of all sufferings? It is Egoism. Egoism is essentially the limitation of life to an individual body, life and mind. Such limitation brings about a psychological isolation by the mind of the individual from the Universal Life and is the root-cause of a fundamental loneliness in the heart of man.

THE MALADY OF THE MODERN AGE

This is the fundamental *Ajnana* which is the background of life in the world of to-day. The isolation of the individual from the sources of Life is responsible for the malady which we know as modern civilisation. Its symptoms are fear, insecurity, a general feeling of the utter meaninglessness of life, loneliness, etc. Man to-day is deeply afraid, afraid of his neighbour, even more afraid of himself, afraid of death and even more afraid of life. What is the underlying cause of this fear? There is a death more terrible than the death of the physical body. It is psychological death, the death of the ego. Man is aware that such a death is imminent and so there is a panic in his system. He cannot face the appalling poverty and emptiness of an existence deprived of the joys of the egoistic life. Threatened with the destruction of all that has constituted for him 'life', he has thrown himself into a feverish activity for the gaining of wealth, sensation and power.

He seeks in external wealth a compensation for the inner poverty of his egoistic life. Because he has lost the power of Love, he seeks consolation in excitement and sensation, in the gratification of a false love. His inner *soul is in bondage, powerless, insignificant and, therefore, he seeks to give a false significance to his life by the vain trappings of power and position. Wealth, sensation and power become the pre-occupations of the modern man.*

But in spite of this clouding of his vision by *Ajnana*, man can never lose his instinctive wisdom, the knowledge of the truth of his own being. Out of the depths of despair, out of a consciousness of bondage comes man's cry for liberation. Such a prayer is its own answer. The consciousness of bondage is the beginning of freedom. What is true of the individual is true of the collective life of Humanity. In the darkest hour of her despair, Humanity throws up individuals embodying in themselves the response to her own needs.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is a significant answer to the world's cry for liberation. He is a strange figure—one of the strangest and yet one of the most fascinating and striking personalities of all times. As a matter of fact, he belongs not to any age, but to all ages, not to time but to eternity. He has renounced as valueless all that the modern world values most. He has no use for money, he is no respecter of rank and position, he reacts to men and women in exactly the same way. His detachment is as complete as it is perfect. Nothing seems to possess the power to disturb his superb poise, his marvellous tranquillity and peace. Tragedy does not move him in a personal way. He has lived publicly for 50 years at the foot of Arunachala, that mystic Hill, the Heart of the world, the secret and sacred Heart-centre of Siva. That Hill is the only symbol, the only adequate representation of his spiritual realisation. More ancient than the Himalayas, forming part of the very foundations of the earth, this bare Hill, the relic of an age which easily runs into a thousand million years or even more, has stood and witnessed the rise and fall of many forms of life of which human history is but a recent and small chapter. Pilgrims who come to witness the yearly festival of the lighting of the Beacon on the top of the Hill and who worship it as the symbol of Siva, instinctively recognise the presence of that same power in the Sage and give to him a like worship. There is little doubt that an ageless Wisdom, as old as the Heart of the Hill, aye even older than that, shines through those wonderful eyes which look with such perfect tranquillity and yet such deep compassion upon the suffering world.

What is the significance of a life like this? What is its relation to a world lost in the primal darkness of a total *Ajnana*? What message can he give to us, he who seems to live in a world so completely *detached from all the human interests which form the background of our lives?*

THE EGO-LESS STATE

There are three well-marked stages in human evolution,—the unconscious, the self-conscious and the self-less or ego-less state. Through countless ages, man lived and struggled to become an individual, a completely integrated self-conscious individual. That stage has yet to be reached by the vast majority of the human race. But there are indications, especially in Western countries, that self-conscious individualism has been attained by the modern man. In fact modern civilisation is the fullest expression of the second stage of human evolution. It is essentially an ego-centric civilisation; its highest concern is the welfare of the individual. Associated or group life is a mere means towards the achievement of the highest possible freedom and well-being of the individual. States exist for the individual man. This is the democratic ideal. Yet there is a vague, indistinct suspicion that there is something inadequate in such a conception of individual freedom, that it is only a half-truth. The totalitarian concept of the subordination of the individual to the State represents the other half-truth, that individual life has no significance except in relationship to the whole. Man in isolation has no meaning, and when he lives only for himself, he stultifies his inner life. The Universal exists and fulfils itself in and through an individual. That is what Democracy and the democratic ideal are seeking to realise. The individual can achieve the perfect life only by harmonising himself with the Universal. That is the second half of the Truth. Communism has only a vague and distorted conception of this view of life. Dialectic materialism regards the entire process of human evolution as a perpetual swing from individualism to collectivism and from collectivism back to individualism on a higher plane. Will this rhythmic, cyclic process never come to an end? Must man ever remain within the domain of dualities? Modern civilised man as represented by the Marxian communist says that this dualistic movement is implicit in Nature and man cannot rise above Nature. Ancient thought has again and again proclaimed self-transcendence, the reconciliation of the *Dwandwas* in a higher synthesis not only as an ideal to be worked for, but as a fact of Super-Nature. The Ego-less state is the

final term of human evolution. Birth, childhood, adolescence, manhood, old age and death, these are inevitable to the body. These have their counterparts in the evolution of the Ego. But the death of the Ego is not annihilation; it is a regeneration, a rebirth. To the *Jnani*, who lives simply and completely in the Natural, the *Sahajasthiti*, evolution of the Ego is as illusory as the Ego itself. There is no evolution for that which is Eternal.

The Maharshi is a living proof of the ancient Advaitic thought. He demonstrates the reality of Self-transcendence, of *Nirvana*, that it is not a negative condition, not a nothingness, but a positive, dynamic state of the human consciousness. The Maharshi states that the Ego-less state is the natural, the real state, that the Ego-state is the unnatural and the false state. The natural condition of the physical body is health, the unnatural condition is disease. Individual self-consciousness is a false imposition on the Real and is therefore a disease and a disorder. Modern civilisation, which is the expression of this disordered condition of the psyche, is therefore itself a disease. Edward Carpenter thought of it and described it as a 'malady' and sought for its cause and cure.

It is not easy to describe the Ego-less state. To one who has not loved, how can one tell what love is? It is easy to analyse mentally, break up the integrity of love and describe the manifestations of love in human behaviour. But love is something more than, other than merely the sum of the symptoms of love. So it is with the Ego-less state. Because that state is natural to us, we instinctively recognise that state. Our instant and immediate response to the radiations of Maharshi's Egolessness is the proof of the existence within ourselves of a standard of evaluation of spiritual quality of the Ego-less state. It is impossible to break up mentally that which is indivisible and which can be apprehended only by the whole of our being. Any fission, any conflict of the elements of our being, is a definite obstacle to such apprehension.

Yet an effort must be made to make such a state intelligible to the mind. What, then, are the characteristics of the Ego-less state? What is the quality of the life that expresses itself through that condition of the consciousness?

The Ego is not an entity. It is much more a symptom of the obstruction of the free flow of life. It is like the ache that manifests itself where there is any functional disorder in any part of the body. Such

obstruction to the expression of the Real Life is the 'I', the false 'I'. To that disorder of the system, we have given the independent status of a being. It has no real objective existence. It comes into being when we limit our consciousness. It disappears whenever we work with the whole of our being. We enjoy a temporary liberation when we are doing truly creative work. When we are wholly absorbed in an activity which involves the co-operation of all the elements of our being, we say we forget ourselves. It is more correct to describe it, not as a momentary forgetfulness of Ego, but as a flash of true Self-awareness. For, there is in us an 'I', a true 'I', which is the true Subject, and for the true Subject, there is no object. To be that true 'I' is to cease to be limited to an individual consciousness. It is to become a focus of the Universal Consciousness. It is the whole, the Totality that is acting continuously through such a focus, the true 'I' in man. As Plotinus said, true virtue is this unimpeded activity of the Spirit. This true 'I' is in a sense, impersonally personal, because it is the manifestation of the Universal and Eternal, of timeless Being through a finite body, life and mind. But the Force that acts is the Power of the Supreme Universal.

LIFE OF THE EGO AND THE LIFE OF THE TRUE 'I'

Egoistic life is a series of reactions to external impacts. Through the gateways of the surface mind and the senses there arrive sensations, feelings and thoughts to which the Ego immediately reacts. It is to such reactions that we ascribe a semblance of Reality; we call it incorrectly our life. With the data given to us by our senses, we construct with our mind a picture, a representation of the outer world, the universe of objective forms; and in the region of the psyche, we create a network of human relationships which pictorially describe our own egoistic reactions, mental, vital and physical, to other Egos, the network which we call *samsara*. To such a mentally constructed universe physical and psychic, we ascribe an independent Reality, because there is a certain measure of agreement in the descriptions of different individuals, though what is known as the personal equation enters largely into our conception of the world of things as they are. The psychic Universe is unique to each ego. That is fairly recognised, but that the physical universe itself, i.e., our conception of it, is entirely mental is now becoming fairly well accepted by some of our most distinguished scientists. Knowledge derived by the mind of such a universe, called by us 'Science', is really an analysis of the law of our own minds.

The super-personal mind considers such a mentally constructed universe as unreal. That the world-appearance, as conditioned by the reports of the present existing senses, is different from the Real world is at least recognised by metaphysicians as valid. *Avidya* is the name given to any science or knowledge based upon a description of Reality by one who wears the spectacles of the Ego. It is illusory only in the sense that the Real world is different from what it appears when looked at from the standpoint of the Ego.

In the Ego-less condition, the true 'I' stands apart from the apparent reactions of the mind. The Sage watches the movements of the mind with the same objective detachment and impersonality as that of the scientific investigator of a physical phenomenon. The immediate effect of such self-scrutiny is a quieting and stilling of the mind. Such a slowing down of mental processes leading to complete inhibition of thought brings to the front a Mind which is self-luminous and which is then capable of being reflected without distortion in the tranquil waters of the moveless kind. This Light of the Divine Mind is like the light of the Sun. Itself invisible, it reveals the inner structure of everything upon which it falls. It enables us to see the Real World, the world of things in themselves. The blind, egoistic or lower mind is like the blind man trying to create a mental picture of a drawing-room, its furniture, and the relations of the several pieces one to the other. Painfully, by prolonged contacts and calculations, he forms a rough idea of that drawing-room and its contents. Such exactly is the condition of the human individual. He sees through the dark glasses of the Ego. He uses all the apparatus of scientific and mathematical thought and is able to reduce the universe to a set of mathematical formulae. Let him, however, be given the gift of vision, then all the speculations and calculations of the mind cease; and in a flash, he sees more swiftly, more accurately, without the shadow of uncertainty that which he has never known before. He no longer argues, because he *sees*. With the help of the light of the Divine Mind, he sees into the innermost nature of things. His mind and consciousness attain by a process of identification, i.e., by a process of being that which you wish to know, a swift illumination of the secret being that is implicit in the heart of things.

No *Jnani* can, therefore, possibly enter into an argument or discussion. He knows because he *is* that which he desires to know, and how can there be anything but the most absolute certitude in his knowledge

of things? He would say to us: "Do not argue, but remove glasses of Ego through which you see everything, every problem." In the light of that Supreme Knowledge, all your mentally constructed problems cease to have validity. We are reminded of the wonderful words of the Buddha: "You close your eyes and cry that it is dark and that you cannot see; open your eyes and see."

This impersonal scrutiny and examination of our mental reactions is a standing aside from the mind. We gradually realise that the 'I' is not the mind. It is the beginning of real self-knowledge. I have reversed the usually accepted technique of Self-knowledge of the Maharshi, because, in a way, it is easier to destroy the sense of our being the mind than to remove physical-body-consciousness.

The super-personal Mind when it reflects itself in the quiescent lower mind is the light of genius. The condition for such a manifestation is the utter surrender of the lower mind, its utter cessation of all personal demands and ambition. Intuitional truth is never arrived at in any other way. The highest intuitions of the human mind have been manifested when the lower mind has had to face a crisis and has had to accept its own complete inadequacy in the face of such a breakdown of the normal functioning of the mental machinery. The aspiration towards a true understanding is the true prayer of the human soul. When the soul seeks for Truth and nothing but the Truth, strips itself naked of every other desire, then the need of the human soul never fails to bring an automatic response from the depths of its own being. Truth is an answer to the cry of the soul for enlightenment. That the answer is from Itself, the One Reality which forms the core of its own self does not make it less of a prayer. Genius, then, is nothing less than the cosmic mind shining momentarily in the tranquil waters of the quiescent mind, the illumination by the Inner Sun of the individual mind.

When the Oversoul shines through the mind, It is genius. When It shines through the feelings, It is a Supreme Love. When It shines through the body, It is Beauty. Man's deepest intentions are an awareness of the existence of Truth, Goodness or Love and Beauty as the central truth of Life. His need for these absolute values is even more urgent and profound than his need for food, clothing and shelter.

GOODNESS OR LOVE

Love is the simplest manifestation of the Oneness of the Absolute. Every one who has loved knows that man forgets himself in loving others, nay, that for the time being, there is the complete absence of an other. All evil arises from an idea of the separate self. The separate self is a fiction, a figment of the egoistic mind. The external world is that which is alien to us, that which we have not understood and so brought within the circle of our own consciousness. To the Supreme Lover, there is no other, no world outside the range and scope of his all-embracing Love. A great Teacher was asked: "Are you not bored with me?" He answered simply: "How can I be bored—are you not myself?" Yes, Love is the apprehension through the feelings of the utter unity, the non-duality, of the entire universe of manifested beings. 'All souls are all things', said Plotinus. 'Goodness is unification and unification is goodness'. The love of our fellow human beings or philanthropy is not the end of morality, but its consequence. We should love our neighbours because they are ourselves. It is a simple awareness of an existing unity in Nature, a unity in Being. Love, then, is not different from or other than Truth. It is the Truth of the oneness of all Life, apprehended through our emotions. Love is utterly spontaneous. There can be no compulsion, no duty in Love.

BEAUTY

When the Oversoul shines through the Physical, It is Beauty. Beauty is the Universal and the Spiritual, announcing itself through the senses to the soul of man. The Poet Rabindranath called Beauty the Messenger of God, His signet ring by which the soul can recognise its Beloved. All aesthetic pleasure is the pleasure of recognition of the Beloved. It is a reflection of the supreme *Ananda*.

The ideal of the perfect life is made manifest to us by the presence of the Sage in our midst. When we see Sage Sri Ramana, we are reminded of the words of Christ who placed before man as his ideal the life of the Lily that toils not: 'Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Why does the great Christian Teacher find the best symbol of the perfect life in the Lily? The growth of the flower into beauty is utterly unconscious. It exists for itself and no other purpose than to manifest the hidden Beauty of God embodied in its brief but perfect life. It gives of its fragrance to all alike. It asks for no gratitude,

solicits no appreciation or praise. You may pass it by in utter unconsciousness of its rare and exquisite charm. Yet it is content to live and enrich life all around with no sense of effort, no feeling of toilsomeness in all the silent work it does, though the work is ceaseless. It is a work which releases an infinite joy at every moment of its existence. Therefore it is that the flower is the most fitting symbol of perfect work, of the ceaseless creation of things of Beauty which are a joy for ever. The Ego-less state therefore is not a negative condition, is not a *nihil.* It is a state of intense spiritual activity constantly releasing and radiating the Power of Truth, of Love and the gracious influence of an exquisite Beauty.

CREATIVE SILENCE

The Maharshi represents a very perfect instance of the Ego-less state. He speaks little and only when he finds it necessary to do so. Silence is to him the most powerful expression of Being, which speech only hinders. Asked to define '*Mouna*' he said, "That stage which transcends speech and thought is *Mouna*; it is meditation without mental activity. Deep meditation is Eternal speech. Silence is ever speaking; it is the perennial flow of language. It is interrupted by speaking, for words obstruct this mute language. Silence is unceasing eloquence. It is the best language."

It is obvious that the Silence of the Maharshi is something more than the inhibition of speech. It is the expression of the Ego-less state. Egoism is a state of tension, of conflict. The mind reacts constantly, almost continuously, to the impact of sensations, thoughts and ideas. The cessation of this continuous reaction is the real Silence. In that Silence, man becomes creative. The Integrated Self becomes a focus of Universal Life which uses the individual as Its agent or tool. Whether such an individual works on the physical plane or not is immaterial. The absence of physical expression means a concentration of Power, as there is no frittering of energy on comparatively lower levels of being, and, therefore, the silent man is the powerful man—especially when the Silence is of the mind, a cessation of its continuous chattering. Sri Maharshi uses the Power of this Silence in a most effective fashion. When any visitor presents him with a problem for solution, he vouchsafes no answer but retires into the depths of his own being. He becomes the embodiment of the very essence of Silence, and in that tranquil quietness, the visitor finds his mind becoming still under an over-powering radiation from the Sage. In that Stillness, the problem dissolves and the visitor leaves the august presence marvelling what mysterious power has come to his aid.

MAHARSHI'S PHILOSOPHY OF WORK

How does the Sage who has reached this Ego-less state work? What does he do to help this fellow human beings? Many have been frankly puzzled by the Maharshi's apparent indifference to what is happening in the world around him. He reads the papers and is familiar with the social and political events. But even a great catastrophe like the war evokes no visible response from him. He is not oppressed by the burden of the world's sorrow, and yet it would be stupid ignorance not to realise that he is one of the most compassionate of men. He seems to deny that God's world is being mismanaged by Him and, therefore, needs the assistance of the political and social philanthropist to set it right. There are so many experiments being made to create new societies, with new ideologies, new movements for human welfare. His view is simple and direct. Find out who is working in you and through you. When you know who and what the Power is which acts, feels and thinks through you, then you will realise that that Power is equally at work in and through all things, that It is a supremely wise and intelligent Principle guiding and shaping men and events to a Divinely appointed end. The Divine order already exists. The society of just men made perfect is an eternal fact of Nature. The moment you have gained Self-knowledge and cast off the fetters of egoism, you become aware of that Divine order and of your place in it as an integral part of the Universal Life. The dream of every idealist, of every social reformer, of every great worker and servant is fundamentally true, for it is a dim intuitive perception of that Archetypal state which is an eternal fact of Super-nature. So, man's great fulfilment consists in realising his own inner nature, status and function and then fitting himself into his divinely appointed place in such a state. If all men fulfilled their *Dharma*, then there would be no place for the philanthropist or the social dreamer. Philanthropy is the subtlest form of egoism born out of a false sense of superiority. It is, therefore, necessary to be aware that to do good, one must *be* good; only the pure in heart can do good. For, out of an evil heart, no good deed can come. It must for ever be stained by the wrong motive which causes the deed to be born.

It is easy to understand that this view of social work and service will fail to appeal to the modern man who sees in it an implied condemnation of what he considers to be an important part of the good life. Yet there is little doubt that the Sage is essentially right. What he says is the teaching of every one who has attained the Ego-less condition. In spite of a visible demonstration of the reality of the Ego-less state, the physical mind has a

certain fear of this self-annihilation. The Silence of the mind is confused with a total destruction of the capacity to think and the void of the Ego-less state is equated by the mind with non-existence. This Emptiness is the result of, to use Sri Aurobindo's words, "the emptying of the cup of our natural being, a liberation of it from its turbid contents, so that it may be filled with the wine of God. It is the passage not to non-existence, but into some vast ineffable of spiritual being or the plunge into the incommunicable superconscience of the Absolute."

When the Ego-less condition has been reached, there is a complete reversal of all our ideas and values. The discipline or *sadhana,* which the individual imposes upon himself in order to attain self-transcendence, becomes the spontaneous expression of the Ego-less state. Virtue is no longer a struggle demanding continuous vigilance and control, but an effortless joyous living. We no longer seek to create movements, societies for attaining universal brotherhood, for imposing a common unity upon a group; but we live together because we have realised our essential oneness, a common life and interest. We no longer serve in order to love, but because we love. We do not need law to control our anti-social tendencies and impose standards of decency and good behaviour; law becomes the expression of the way in which liberated men and women behave towards each other. The moral man is the self-controlled man who observes in his conduct a certain code of good behaviour. The spiritual man is the self-less man. He has no moral codes; he is a law unto himself, for that morality which has for its objective the control of egoistic passions and impulses ceases to have meaning to a man who has no self to control, who has attained self-transcendence. The moral man *does* not do evil; the spiritual man *cannot* do evil. The moral man controls anger and lust and covetousness. The spiritual man is incapable of anger, lust and covetousness.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE EGO-LESS OR SPIRITUAL MAN

With the development and emergence of mind out of inconscience, the evolution of forms came to an end. In animals and lower forms, there is a continuous adaptation of the organism to the pressure of the environment or what may be vaguely described as an evolutionary demand. Animals learned to fly by the development of wings. But man is essentially a tool-using and a tool-making animal. He does not grow wings but invents aeroplanes. He does not burden himself with a defensive armour. He builds forts or underground shelters to defend

himself. With the growth of the scientific intellect, the manufacture of tools and weapons has reached vast proportions. The atom bomb represents the latest weapon discovered by scientific genius. With the enormous growth of the mind, man's physical body has become more and more vulnerable, less and less capable of defending itself against attacks both from external enemies, as well as the invisible enemies like disease. Man is also living more and more in his vital and mental bodies than in the physical. So, in a sense, physical evolution has come to an end for man. Mental and psychic development has taken the place of physical evolution. There are signs that mental development has practically reached its highest peak of attainment in the present age. The discovery of the atom bomb places before man two alternatives—(1) total self-destruction on a global scale; (2) the discovery by man of a higher form of living which makes war impossible in the future. Eastern Teachers like the Buddha and the Christ have taught us that the use of force as a weapon of defence or offence is essentially evil. "Hatred ceaseth not by hatred, but hatred ceaseth by love," so said the Lord Buddha. The use of violence strengthens the desire of the enemy to resist. So violence itself forges the weapons of a counter-violence. There are two ways by which we can defend ourselves against aggression; one is the discovery of more powerful weapons of offence so as to enable us to compel the aggressor to be on the defensive. The second way is to disarm the enemy by Love.

Doubts have often been expressed about the possibilities of this latter method proving effective. But we have had no means of examining this technique of moral disarmament and its effectiveness. The selfless man is still a rare and isolated phenomenon. We have given him our love and worship. But we have never examined his psychic influence, its nature and range. When scientists were investigating the nature of the nucleus of the atom, a thrill, a feeling of awe, greeted the discovery of Radium. A whole new world of wonder, of beauty and power was revealed to the gaze of the scientist. The atom bomb has discovered sources of almost infinite energy in the heart of the atom. The disintegration of the atom has released the primal energy locked up in its being,

The Ego is the atom of the psychic world. If the disintegration of the atom has given us so much power, what may not be accomplished by the annihilation of this ego-self?

The Sage of Tiruvannamalai can answer this question.

HE HIMSELF IS THE LIVING ANSWER.

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA
THE EMBODIMENT OF SPIRITUAL POWER

By

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With mute wonder, and contemplation deep, do I venture to contribute my humble thoughts of admiration and reverence about Bhagavan Sri Ramana, for the Souvenir to be published on the unique occasion of the celebration of the Golden Jubilee, in recognition of the completion of 50 years since the date of his having set his foot on the sacred soil of Tiruvannamalai, in quest of his Divine Father, Sri Arunachala.

In the galaxy of spiritual Stars who have shone forth from time to time spreading lustre over the land of Bharata Matha, Sri Ramana Maharshi is one of the brightest. No wonder that this great Sage of modern times has been the cynosure for the eyes of a vast multitude of people, who have been fortunate enough to come under his divine gaze during the course of the past half a century. During all these years, it is a matter for wonder that he never allowed his physical body to go beyond the ambit of Tiruvannamalai, wherein the sacred temple and the Hill of Arunachala are situated. This is a unique feature in his life. Young as he was, a boy of 16, when he first came to this town, there was nothing to tempt him to visit any other place; he had the firm resolve to abide firmly in *Atmanishtha*, in communion with the Supreme Being, at some secluded spot or other, even at his tender age, quite unmindful of the troubles, pains and privations of the physical body. The austerities to which he subjected himself, while he was so young and was not understood by the lay public in the proper perspective, are really telling. From the time of his arrival at the sacred town, he was in a state of *Mouna* (Silence), forgetful of his body and the external world and was immersed in mystic contemplation of the Divine, fully absorbed in the Cosmic Consciousness and rapt in Bliss ineffable. That supreme State was attained by him, without any preliminary *Sadhanas* in this incarnation, and it resembled a full-grown bud ready

to blossom forth before the rising sun. There was even in his boyhood the culmination of Self-realisation, and Beatific Vision. In communion with the Eternal Spirit, he merged his individual consciousness in the Universal Self, with the result, that he saw the world was as a shadow of or an emanation from Brahman.

It was only after the lapse of some years in a state of Silence, despite the severe ordeals for his body, which were all endured with perfect calmness and patience, that he chose to break the ice of silence, and allow the benefit of the sweet flow of his speech to those who approached him with devotion and love. During the time of his abode on the Hill of the Holy Beacon, Arunachala, with no more than a small piece of loin-cloth as his garment, several persons were eager to visit him and drink the nectar of the spiritual teachings imparted by him in a homely fashion. Having perfected the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (the continuous state of absorption in the Supreme Self) and prompted by his deep love for humanity to sublimate it from its spiritual darkness caused by the Veil of *Maya*, he made himself the benefactor of mankind without showing any distinction of caste, creed or race, and treating alike the rich and the poor, learned and ignorant, man and woman. He imparted wisdom to all who sought for it, adapting his teachings to the capacity of the inquirer. In this way his glory spread itself far and wide.

Having realised the Self as the all-pervading *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (immanent and transcendent), his Wisdom and Knowledge flowed directly from the Atmic or trans-intellectual regions and filtered down unimpeded into his physical brain consciousness. That being so, he needed not the spectacles of books to read 'Nature', nor was any course of academic training necessary for him. When the flash of intuition revealed the Reality to him, the process of doubtful intellectual reasoning need not be resorted to by him. In many a conversation with him even savants of great learning were struck with wonder at the nature of his answers replete with rare wisdom. Sometimes, his answers would be cryptic, so as to go beyond the grasp of an ordinary mind.

When this great Sage was easily accessible to the devotees, during the period of his stay in the Virupaksha cave on the sacred Hill, I had the opportunity of having his *Darshan* and of listening to some of his soul-elevating talks. The years 1909 and '10 and the earlier part of 1911, when I was the District Munsif of Tiruvannamalai, I deem to be

auspicious in my life, for the only reason that I had the privilege of sitting at the feet of Sri Bhagavan now and then, and learning what my limited mind could grasp from the great Tree of his spiritual Knowledge. The more I came in contact with him, the greater was my devotion to him. In those days, Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastrigal, a great savant in Sanskrit literature, and also a Yogi, was struck with admiration on finding the greatness of Sri Bhagavan. In the booklet, styled as "*Sri Ramana Gita*" composed by the Sastrigal, as Slokas in Sanskrit, are found gems of spiritual teachings given by Sri Bhagavan more than 30 years ago, in reply to questions put by seekers after Truth. I can only say that Sri Bhagavan is a mine of Wisdom. Questions on many abstruse subjects, have been answered with a clarity and directness, which would not be possible except for a realized soul or *Jivanmukta.* For instance, in reply to a query about the Self, Sri Bhagavan has stated that the primal state of the Self is the flame of Consciousness, pure and simple, apart from the objective world.

The spiritual lessons, which Sri Bhagavan was imparting to earnest inquirers for over four decades would be legion. They have been incorporated in several treatises written in English and Tamil, in the form of prose and verse, and this precious literature has been widely read all over the civilized world. About 3000 years ago, a Greek Philosopher was bombarded with some knotty questions. To the question "What is the easiest thing in the World?" his answer was "To give advice to others". To another question, viz., "What is the most difficult thing in the world", he answered "To know one's own true Self". Sri Bhagavan's main teachings were directed towards the attainment of that Knowledge which is otherwise called "Self-Realization."

To this search, Sri Bhagavan has given the key from his own experience. All the conundrums connected with this inquiry, have been solved by him in a masterly way as shown in the precious booklets, such as "*Who am I*", *A Catechism of Enquiry, A Catechism of Instruction, Ulladu Narpadu or Sad-Vidya* and *Maharshi's Gospel* (*Books I & II*). The primary *sadhana* is portrayed in "*Who am I?*" as a contemplation in the following manner: "I am not this physical body, nor am I the five organs of sense-perception; I am not the five organs of external activity, nor am I the five vital forces nor am I even the thinking mind. Neither am I that unconscious state of nescience .... That which then remains separate and alone by itself, that pure Awareness verily am I. This

भान्तं भर्गमिव प्रशान्तहृदयं ब्रह्मात्मविद्याबलात्.
ध्वस्तध्वान्तमतं नितान्तविमलस्वान्तं कृतान्तान्तकम् ।
अज्ञानावृतिमोचनेन कृपया प्रज्ञानसंपत्करं
जन्मर्क्षे रमणं निजात्मरमणं भद्राय वन्दामहे ॥

Sri Ramana Who shines like Siva and remains withdrawn into the Heart; in the light of Whose realisation of the Self to be the Supreme Being the darkness of duality has fled away; Who oversides Death itself; Whose Grace tears off the veil of ignorance, and bestows the good fortune of Knowledge; Who delights in the Self alone; to Him for our own well-being, let us prostrate this happy day!

वदान्यो निष्णातः कविरपि गुरुः कञ्जवदनः
कृतज्ञो लक्ष्मीवान्सरलसरलस्सर्वसुलभः ।
वरेण्यः प्रसन्नश्शुचिरपि बुधस्संयमिवरो
जयन्तीपुण्याह्रे रमण इह मोदं वितरति ॥

Munificent, skilful in every way, Seer as well as Master, of blooming face, correct in conduct [or mindful of past good], prosperous, transparent in simplicity, easy of manners, adorable, happy, though pure like Fire (Agni) yet pleasing like Budha, the son of Soma (hence *soumya* = pleasing) perfectly self-controlled—Ramana of such fame gives us joy this blessed day.

आत्मविद्याभूषणम्
श्री जगदीश्वरशास्त्रिविरचितम्

Atmavidyabhushanam
—*Sri Jagadiswara Sastri*

Awareness is by its very nature, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss." This is the direct path indicated by Sri Bhagavan to all aspirants for *jnana*, which leads to *Moksha* or Liberation. What I was able to grasp from the words of Sri Bhagavan about the practice of this *Yoga* (if I may call it so), I have described in a crude way in my Foreword to that excellent book styled as "Self-Realisation" (Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi) which was written in 1930 by my revered friend Sri B. V. Narasimha Swamy and first published in 1931. The relevant passage in that Foreword runs thus: "Retreat ever within thine own self; seek the Source whence the restless mind spins out an unceasing web of thoughts; brush aside the springing thoughts, concentrate at the root of thought; and take repose in that stillness and quietude. So much is thy effort, and what next is one for experience and inner realisation, and does not admit of exposition in words". A strenuous practice of this kind of meditation or contemplation will lead to the experience of one's natural and primal State, which is beyond the three lower states of consciousness, viz., waking, dream and deep sleep. That transcendental State is pure Knowledge, which is not conscious of any object, but not unconscious itself. In that state, there is unconditioned Bliss. If the enjoyment of Bliss should depend upon any extraneous condition, it cannot be unchanging and permanent. Such a condition is liable to changes, many and varied, and what depends on it should also share the same fate. After realizing the Truth, if one wakes up in this phenomenal world, he will not be affected by its illusion. Having perceived the Unity, he would feel that there is nothing distinct from himself and that what he has realized shines forth as all the phenomena of the objective world. Though the things appear to be changing, his state remains unchanged. This is the natural eternal state according to Sri Bhagavan's teaching.

Having thus obtained perfection in this incarnation even at an early age of his physical body, it is no wonder that in Sri Bhagavan all sense of personality ("I") dissolved itself in the Self-Impersonal. What is the result of his abiding in the Majesty of the cosmic Self? The sense of separateness is non-existent. He sees everything in himself and himself in everything. Whatever seems to happen in the world, whether good or evil from the worldly standpoint, is incapable of affecting his peace, which passeth understanding. He has gone beyond the pairs of opposites, and looks at events in the light of the Absolute. At no time has this Sage done anything on his own initiative as if he had a particular desire for

something nor has he directed others to do anything in fulfilment of any purpose. He has all the characteristics of a *Sthitaprajna* described in *Srimad Bhagavat Gita.*

Being one with the Divine Self, he manifests the highest traits of Iswara, such as love, compassion, equanimity, patience, and detachment. His love and compassion are shown not only towards the human kingdom but also towards the sub-human. The State he attained has made it natural for him to observe the dictum: "Weep with those who weep — rejoice with those who rejoice". Is not this a noble feature in the conduct of Sri Rama (the incarnation of the supreme Lord Narayana)? As for equanimity, his very presence generates an atmosphere of peace which is felt by several devotees who go to visit him with sincerity and faith. His look is steady and gracious. Some of those who approached him with a few questions in their minds found that the answers were given, anticipating their questions. Some find their doubts cleared while sitting silently within his aura, without any speech by him.

It may be asked, what is the secret of such power. By the most difficult practice of the stilling of the mind, the lifting of the veil of *Maya* has been accomplished. Consequently, he has seen into the heart of creation, and perceived his oneness with the rest of mankind. The fundamental teaching of all the Upanishads is that the self of each man is not different from and, when freed from the veil of *Maya* (*Prakrti*), is identical with the Universal Self. It is beautifully explained by Edward Carpenter, in his book *The Teachings of the Upanishads*. The following quotation from it will not be out of place: "The cistern is the great Reservoir of the Universe which contains the pure and perfect Spirit of all life. Each one of us and every mortal creature represents a drop from that reservoir—a drop indeed which is also pure and perfect (though the phial in which it is contained may not always be so). When we, each of us, descend into the world and meet the great Ocean of Life which dwells there behind all mortal forms, it is like the little phial being poured into the great Reservoir. If the tiny canful, which is ourselves, is pure and unsoiled, then when it meets the World, it will blend with the Spirit which informs the world perfectly harmoniously, without distress or dislocation. It will pass through and be at one with it. How can one describe such a state of affairs? You will have the key to every person that you meet, because indeed you are conscious that the real essence of that person is the same as your own. You will have the solution of

every event which happens. For every event is (and is felt to be) the touch of the great Spirit on yours." The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says, "If a man worship the Self only as his true state, his work cannot fail, for whatever he desires, that he obtains from the Self." On this passage, the comment by Edward Carpenter is "What a wonderful saying and how infallibly true! For obviously if you succeed in identifying your true being with the great Self of the Universe, then whatever you desire, the great Self will also desire and therefore every power of Nature will be at your service and will conspire to fulfil your need." Such will be the glory of one who has attained this state of Perfection.

India, which is called "*Bharatha Bhumi*", is the heart of the World, as the great *Rishis* of hoary antiquity had set their holy feet on its sacred soil. They were great Seers. They have left a rich legacy of spiritual literature for the good of posterity. Even in modern times, such Sages and Saints do exist, though the materialistic and sceptical minds have not the good fortune of understanding and appreciating their worth. In their jaundiced vision, they can only see the apparently inactive physical condition of these saints, and jump to the conclusion, that no activities for the service of the world are done by them in any tangible form. In this connection, I have to indent upon a lecture on "Hindu Culture" recently published in a book containing selections from the writings and speeches of that repository of remarkable and versatile talents, Dr. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar. He, therein, refers to the estimate of the Western literary world of such Sages, by quoting the following lines of a modern Poet, on the "Spirit of the East":—

> "Reposeful, patient, undemonstrative,
> Luxurious, enigmatically sage,
> Aloof from our mutations and unrest;
> Alien to our achievements and desires,
> Another brain dreaming other dreams,
> Another heart recalling other Loves."

The idea underlying these lines (with which the learned lecturer does not agree) is explained by him to be that Eastern thought and Eastern spirit are so aloof from the realms of activity that they need not be taken seriously by the world's workers. It is well that such minds are disillusioned. They ignore the fact that the world is an emanation of the Supreme Spirit, according to its great and marvellous design, and that there is an inner and spiritual Govern-

ment conducted by the great Occult Hierarchy, mighty Intelligences wielding enormous powers and forces, conducive to the progress of evolution according to the plan of Iswara (the Supreme Lord of the Universe). The physical activities of selfless workers for the good of humanity need not always be regarded as their own original or unaided work. They are frequently inspired by the spiritual forces generated on the super-physical planes, by great Sages and Saints, not perceptible to the physical senses of mankind. Great scientists, philosophers, and poets, have had such an illumination, which they could not account for with the aid of the known laws of the physical world. My belief is, that by reason of the sprinkling here and there of such Saints and Sages in India, it has escaped the dire catastrophe of being actually a war zone in the recent devastating World War. Divine Justice keeps the balance even, in dispensing the fruits of *Karma,* collectively or individually, and India has had its share of sufferings in proportion to the evil *Karma* of its population as a whole. Such suffering should be a corrective either to an individual or to a nation.

What I have stated in the preceding paragraph may seem to be a digression, but it is relevant to the purpose of this article. After having his abode on the sacred Hill for some years and then in "Skandasramam" on the Hill itself, a beautiful garden near Palithirtham at the foot of the Hill, became the place of his residence, which with the imposing structures therein came to be known as "Sri Ramanasramam". In its early days, a small building only could be sighted in this garden, where Sri Bhagavan used to allow the daily stream of devotees to have his *Darshan* and listen to his teachings. In the course of more than two decades, this Asramam developed itself into a charming and splendid colony, like the silvery moon expanding in size and increasing in brilliance during the bright fortnight. The spiritual glory of the Maharshi has been demonstrated by him in the conduct of his life. The drama of worldly life was played by him not in the fashion of the ordinary earth-bound soul, but in the most extraordinary fashion of a liberated soul. Those incidents are exhaustively described in a telling manner in the book of Sri Narasimhaswamy, already referred to. That book has now undergone four editions. It seems to me that the first publication of this book in the English language was the means of spreading the greatness of this Sage in the Western world. It must have attracted the attention of several aspirants born and brought up in western civilisation, with the result that some of them undertook

the long journey to Sri Ramanasramam, prompted by their eager desire to visit Sri Bhagavan. Some of them became staunch devotees and took their residence in buildings nearby the Asramam itself. Besides these men and women from foreign countries, innumerable are the Indians, rich and poor, prince and peasant, learned and ignorant, who have been resorting to this Asramam during all these years. When a big fountain of fresh, limpid water is approached by several people, the quantity which each can carry away is in proportion to the size of the vessel he takes there. They must have understood the greatness of this Sage, each according to the extent of his capacity.

Both by precept and example, Sri Bhagavan has been imparting moral and spiritual lessons. His love and tenderness made him very familiar to squirrels, monkeys, dogs and cows. They used to be fondled by him, and he had response from them. The remarkable affection he had for the cow "Lakshmi" used to find expression almost daily. This cow was, as it were, the mistress in the *Goshala* (cow-house) built in the Asramam. Need I say how much his love is towards humanity? As a daily routine, the feeding of those who visit the Asramam will go on, and Sri Bhagavan would sit in the midst of the devoted guests and take his food. Even before serving the varieties of food prepared in the Asramam, the leaf spread before Sri Bhagavan should have placed in it some food prepared by two privileged elderly women (one Brahmin and the other non-Brahmin), for they were the women who were giving food to Sri Bhagavan with love and devotion from the early stages of his life, before the establishment of this colony. Does this not show gratitude and condescension on the part of Sri Bhagavan? Can there be a more striking instance of patience and forgiveness than the occasion when some ruffians broke into the Asramam at night, with intent to commit robbery, and belaboured some of the inmates including Sri Bhagavan himself, being disappointed by reason of the small booty available there? The whole behaviour of Sri Bhagavan in connection with that incident serves to illustrate the famous Sermon on the Mount.

In another sense, Sri Bhagavan, who has realised the true Self, may be said to be free from qualities. The Self is not a bundle of qualities, but is the Being that transcending those qualities perceives them. The Self is the one Witness, throughout the Universe, but is hidden in all living beings. In everything that has consciousness it is the Self which watches over all operations and moves in the depths of our

hearts. The Self is the Perceiver, the only Being that is cognisant of all and yet free from all. This is the highest philosophical teaching of the Upanishads. The happiness experienced by one who has entered into the Self is of an extraordinary kind beyond the power of words to describe.

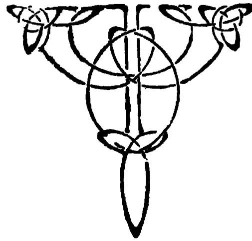
About the beginning of January 1942, I had once again the privilege of visiting the Asramam, which by that time had become a full-fledged colony. My impressions of that visit were noted by me which were also published in the *Sunday Times.* My description pales into insignificance, when the glowing accounts given by European and American savants are read. However, I shall give a gist of my own account.

On seeing Sri Bhagavan seated in the spacious hall in the midst of several devotees squatting on the floor, I was impressed with his silence, which was more potent than his speech. Those who sat in the hall within his aura have a splendid opportunity for the practice of *Dhyana* especially when Sri Bhagavan is in a state of silent *Samadhi.* This is in conformity with the saying:—"In the quiet of the senses, in the tranquillity of the mind, man beholds the majesty of the Spirit". I was also impressed with the system and discipline adopted there. A sense of brotherhood is felt. Sri Niranjanananda Swamigal, who has been in management of the Asram affairs, as Sarvadhikari, is full of zeal and devotion. The workers in the Asram evince great interest in the discharge of their duties as an act of dedication to Sri Bhagavan.

On the eve of my departure from the Asramam, the Grace of Sri Bhagavan prompted him to illumine my mind with the torch of spiritual light thus:—The Eternal and Universal Self, which is all-pervading and all-sustaining, is the only Reality, whereas to those who are subject to the influence of Avidya, it is something hidden, something inaccessible. They remain oblivious to the self-evident Reality and labour under the illusion of its shadows. Each individual identifies himself with the fragmentary ego, the little "I" which functions with a sense of separateness, confounding the knowledge of the external world derived through the senses in the wakeful state, with the Reality. Such knowledge is entirely absent in the state of dreamless sleep. That which is real is unchanging in all the three states of consciousness and our quest is not for something new but for what is always present, which

however is not recognised on account of the veil of *Maya* covering it. It is that Reality which is declared by the first *Mahavakya.* (*Prajnanam Brahma*). .

May Sri Bhagavan bless the World. May he bless humanity with his all-embracing love, for its peace, prosperity, and progress in the path of righteousness! May Sri Ramanasramam continue as a flourishing centre of *Vairagya*, *Bhakti* and *Jnana!*



BHAGAVAN

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

(AN ACROSTIC)

B for Bliss of the Beyond,
H „ Holiness of the Heart,
A „ Abode of the Absolute,
G „ Glory of the Great,
A „ All-ness of the ALL,
V „ Vision of the Verity,
A „ Action of the Accomplished,
N „ Nectar of the Naked.

S „ Self of the self,
R „ Radiance of the Real,
I „ Immortality of the Immutable.

R „ Rhythm of Revelation,
A „ Abundance of the Almighty,
M „ Mystery of the Marvellous,
A „ Annihilation of *ahankar*,
N „ Negation of nescience,
A „ Assertion of the *Atman*.

M „ Manifestation of the Most High,
A „ Alertness of the Awakened,
H „ Humility of the Heroic,
A „ Attestation of Antiquity,
R „ Resplendence of Realisation,
S „ Silence of the Supreme,
H „ Harmony of Heaven,
I „ Illumination of the Incomprehensible.

—*Sri Rajeswarananda*

SPIRIT OF PEACE

(HUMBLY OFFERED TO SRI RAMANA)

O living God, O Spirit Blest,
Father of all, in Thee I rest.
Thou art my tender, gentle calm,
Thou art my sorrow's healing balm.

Spirit of Peace, Supernal Source,
Wisdom divine that guides my course,
Light of the World, that lightens me,
Thou dost redeem and set me free!

Over my heart Thy hand is laid,
And Revelation comes to me;
Discord dissolves, and unafraid
I realize my Self in Thee!

—*Veronica Eyton.*
(California)

SRI RAMANA

AND

His Message to Modern Man

By

Dr. C. G. Jung, (Zurich)

(Being Extracts from Dr. C. G. Jung's Introduction to Dr. Zimmer's *Der Weg Zum Selbst, The Way to the Self* or The Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.)

SRI RAMANA is a true son of the Indian earth. He is genuine and, in addition to that, something quite phenomenal. In India he is the whitest spot in a white space.

What we find in the life and teachings of Sri Ramana is the purest of India; with its breath of world-liberated and liberating humanity, it is a chant of millenniums. This melody is built up on a single, great motif, which, in a thousand colorful reflexes, rejuvenates itself within the Indian spirit, and the latest incarnation of which is Sri Ramana Maharshi himself.

The identification of the Self with God will strike the European as shocking. It is a specifically oriental Realization, as expressed in Sri Ramana's utterances. Psychology cannot contribute anything further to it, except the remark that it lies far beyond its scope to propose such a thing. However, it is clear to the Indian that the Self as spiritual Source is not different from God; and in so far as man abides in his Self, he is not only contained in God but is God Himself. Sri Ramana is quite clear in this respect.

The Goal of Eastern practices is the same as that of Western Mysticism: the focus is shifted from the 'I' to the Self, from Man to God. This means that the 'I' disappears in the Self, and Man in God. A similar effort is described in the *exercitia spiritualia*, in which the 'personal property', the 'I' subjugate to the highest possible degree to the possessorship of Christ. Sri Ramakrishna adopted the same position in regard to the Self, only with him the dilemma between the 'I' and the

Self comes a little more closely to the foreground. Sri Ramana declares unmistakably that the real purpose of spiritual practice is the dissolution of the 'I'. Ramakrishna, however, shows a somewhat hesitating attitude in this respect. Though he says "As long as the I-sense lasts, so long are true Knowledge (*Jnana*) and Liberation (*Mukti*) impossible", yet he must acknowledge the fatal nature of *ahankara*. He says "How very few can obtain this Union (*Samadhi*) and free themselves from this 'I'? It is very rarely possible. Talk as much as you want, isolate yourself continuously, still this 'I' will always return to you. Cut down the poplar tree today, and you will find tomorrow it forms new shoots. When you ultimately find that this 'I' cannot be destroyed, let it remain as 'I' the servant." In relation to this concession, Sri Ramana is certainly the more radical.

The changing relations between these two quantities, the 'I' and the Self, represent a field of experience which the introspective consciousness of the East has explored to a degree almost unattainable by the Western human being. The philosophy of the East, which is so very different from ours, represents to us a highly valuable present, which, however, we "must obtain in order to possess." Sri Ramana's words once again sum up the principal things which the Spirit of India has accumulated during thousands of years in contemplation of the Inner Self; and the individual life and work of the Maharshi exemplifies once more the innermost striving of the Indian people to find the liberating original Source. I say "once more", because India stands before the fatal step of becoming a *State*, and with that to enter the community of nations, the leading principles of which have everything on their programme except just the 'solitude' and the peace of the soul.

The Eastern nations are threatened by a quick disintegration of their spiritual goods, and what comes into their place cannot always be considered to belong to the best of the Western mind. Therefore, one may look upon Sages like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana as modern prophets. They not only remind us of the thousands of years' old spiritual culture of India, but also directly embody it. Their life and teachings form an impressive warning not to forget the demand of the soul in all the new things of Western civilization and their materialistic-technical and commercial concerns of the world. The breathless impulse to obtain and possess in the political, social and intellectual fields, which is rummaging the apparent, unappeasable passion in the soul

of the Westerner, is also spreading continuously in the East and threatens to bear consequences not yet to be overlooked. Not only in India but also in China, much has already been lost in which once the life of the soul lived and flourished. The externalization-culture of the West can truly clear away many evils, the destruction of which seems to be very desirable and advantageous. But, as experience has shown, this progress is bought too dearly with a loss of spiritual culture. It is undoubtedly more comfortable to dwell in a well-ordered and hygienically furnished house, but that does not answer the question as to *who* is the dweller in this house, and whether his soul enjoys a similar state of order and purity, that is, like that of the house serving for external life. Once man is set to the pursuit of external things, he is never satisfied, as experience shows, with the mere necessities of life, but always strives after more and more, which, true to his prejudices, he always seeks in external things. He forgets entirely that in spite of all external success inwardly he remains the same, and therefore complains of his poverty when he owns only one motor-car instead of two like others around him. Certainly, the external life of man can bear many improvements and beautifications, but they lose their significance to the extent to which the inner man cannot keep up with them. The provision with all "necessities" is, without doubt, a source of happiness which is not to be under-estimated. But above and beyond it, the inner man raises his claim, which cannot be satisfied by any external goods: and the less this voice is heard in the hunt for 'the wonderful things' of this world, the more the inner man becomes a source of inexplicable bad luck and ununderstandable unhappiness in the midst of conditions of life from which one would expect something quite different. The externalization leads to an incurable suffering, because nobody can understand how one could suffer because of one's own nature. Nobody is surprised at his own insatiability, but looks upon it as his birthright; he does not realize that the one-sidedness of the diet of his soul ultimately leads to the most serious disturbances of balance. It is this which forms the illness of the Westerner, and he does not rest till he has infected the whole world with his greedy restlessness.

The Wisdom and Mysticism of the East have, therefore, a very great deal to tell us, provided they speak in their own inimitable speech. They should remind us of what we possess in our own culture of similar things and have already been forgotten, and direct our attention to that which we put aside as unimportant, namely the destiny of our inner

man. The life and teachings of Sri Ramana are not only important for the Indian but also for the Westerner. Not only do they form a record of great human interest, but also a warning message to a humanity which threatens to lose itself in the chaos of its unconsciousness and lack of self-control.

HEART'S HOMAGE TO SRI RAMANA

To Bhagavan Sri Ramana the Sage of Arunachala,
In whom Lord Siva, the *Maha-Guru*, shows Himself in truth
As light in the pure mirror of Sakthi, His own,—
To that incomparable Maharshi, the father and mother of all,
In whom Siva and the Goddess are ever united in Bliss,—
To that Sage, whose presence delights the heart,
And whose *leela* is the wonder of all,—
To him be offered mind, heart, body,—all creation !......
It's often said, there's nothing new
In this old world of ours, that history
Repeats itself in endless variations of the self-same tunes;
Yet, I say O Ramana! thou art singing a new Melody;
For it's the first time in the life of our so ancient earth,
That people of all races and all creeds
Are coming to the self-same Source to find the Truth;
For Hindus, Parsees, Buddhists, Jews,
And Christians, Muslims, Atheists, from all the world
Are flocking to thy feet, to pay their homage
In silence, or prostrations, as heart and custom teach; ......
In spite of distance and of great sacrifice
They come drawn irresistibly,—they know not how,—
By the magnet of thy being, to which they bow
Their head, in which they plunge and lose themselves
To find themselves, O happy lot! ......
If future generations will ask what was
The special note of Ramana the Sage,
I shall reply: If any, it is *Certainty*;
The certain safety of a Rock, unmoved,
Unchallenged in a storm-swept sea.
The immovable solidity of a Mountain
In an ever-wavering world of doctrines, and philosophies,
Yea, truly art thou the Sage of '*Arunachala*' !......

Swami Ekarasa
(Dr. G. H. Mees, M. A., LL. D.)



A HYMN TO SRI RAMANA

वन्दे रमणमहर्षिं वसुधातलवर्तमानदेवर्षिम् ।
मूर्तीभवत्प्रबोधं मुखतेजोधूतभक्तदुर्बोधम् ॥ १ ॥

1. Salutations to Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Sage divine, now dwelling on earth as knowledge Incarnate, the Radiance from whose face dispels the darkness of ignorance in his devotees' mind.

वेदान्तादिनिरुक्तो वेदान्तज्ञानिहृदयसंसक्तः ।
शान्तोरसोऽद्यदृष्टो रमणमहर्षिस्वरूपमालंब्य ॥ २ ॥

2. That quality of serenity described by the *Vedanta* as dwelling in the heart of the Knowers of the Truth propounded by the scriptures, is here seen embodied in the human form of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

अवदन्नुपदिशतिहितं मार्गंसंदर्शयतितथाऽपश्यन् ।
श्रेयःकरोत्यकुर्वन् रमणर्षिं श्चित्रमात्मभक्ताय ॥ ३ ॥

3. He speaks not yet he teaches the highest Good. He looks not, yet he points the Path. He toils not, yet he fulfils the highest beneficence. How wonderful are the ways of Sri Ramana!

विन्देद्विद्यांमूढो दुष्टमतिस्साधुशीलतांचलभेत् ।
मग्नो बहिरभिगच्छेत् रमणमहर्षेःकटाक्षविक्षेपात् ॥ ४ ॥

4. By Ramana's Grace, the fool turns wise; the wicked walk in the path of virtue; and even the sunken swim ashore.

अन्तश्शत्रुविजेता जीवन्मुक्तात्मभावविज्ञाता ।
पुष्करपलाशवन्नि र्लिप्तात्मानन्दयोगिरमणर्षिः ॥ ५ ॥

5. Victor over the inner foes, knowing the Truth of Liberation in life, Sri Ramana stays in the Bliss of Self, untainted by the world as the lotus-leaf by water.

॥ श्रीरमणमहर्षिस्तोत्रम् ॥

अरुणाचलेशवासा दरुणाचलनाम भारते व्याप्तम् ।
रमणमहर्षिनिवासा दधुना खण्डान्तरेषुचव्याप्तम् ॥ ६ ॥

6. Lord Arunachala being here, Arunachala has been famous in India. Ramana Maharshi being here, its fame has spread to all the continents.

श्री मल्लादि सूर्यनारायणशास्त्रिविरचितम् —*Sri Malladi Suryanarayana Sastri*



वन्दे श्रीरमणं पवित्रहृदयं षड्वर्गविध्वंसिनं
वेद्यं योगविशारदै प्रतिदिनं वन्द्यं सता मानवैः ।
तुर्यातीतपदास्थित सकरुणं दीप्ताग्निशैलस्थितं
मज्जन्मान्तरपुण्यपाकवशतः प्राप्तं प्रभुं सद्गुरुम् ॥

Salutations to Lord Sri Ramana, the Compassionate One who dwells on the Hill of bright fire, the Slayer of the six inner foes,* understood only by adepts in *yoga* and worthy of daily worship by all men for ever, to Him who is firmly established in the State Transcendent and Whom I have obtained as my *Sad-Guru* by virtue of the accumulated merits of past lives.

महामहोपाध्याय
श्री कुप्पुस्वामिशास्त्रिविरचितम्

Mahamahopadhyaya
Sri Kuppuswami Sastri

* Desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy.

WITH SRI RAMANA OF ARUNACHALA



I've wandered far: yes I have been
From land to land to land:
Sages I've seen, great king and queen,
The lowly, wise and grand.

But only there,— at the Asramam
By Arunachalam,—
Have I known that joy without alloy,
I am! I am! I am!

—*Grant Duff.*
(Douglas Ainslie.)

OUR HOMAGE
TO
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

Prof. B. L. Atreya, M.A., D.Litt.

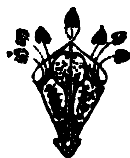
(Professor of Philosophy & Psychology, Benares Hindu University.)

A saint is as great a necessity of human society as a great scientist, a great thinker and a great leader,—nay even greater. For a scientist discovers the secrets of life and of the universe; a thinker tries to understand the meaning and purpose of existence; and a leader tries to shape and transform humanity or a portion of it according to his own notions of what it ought to be; whereas a saint is one who makes whole-hearted effort to realise in himself, in his own life, the highest and furthest possibilities of human life, which in a natural course of evolution may take centuries to actualize. A saint is a man perfected, a fulfilled hope of humanity, a successful experiment in human sublimation, and a source of inspiration and guidance to the travellers on the path to perfection. He is the embodiment of the highest values of humanity, an indubitable indication that ideals can be made real, that man can be what he ought to be, here and now. His life is a measure of man's manhood, when it is lived in the midst of humanity and not in sanctified seclusion. It is a practical solution of the various puzzles of life, provided it is a comprehensive one. Considered from various points of view, a saint is the greatest asset of human society. A perfected being, he is the eternal beacon-light to the *sadhakas* all the world over.

I have read the biographies of many a saint, seen a number of them and have come in contact with some. I have had the privilege of being at the *Ashrama* of Sri Ramana Maharshi for a short time in March 1940 and since then in correspondence with him.[1] He made a deep impression upon my mind, a mind that has been moulded by a study of scientific and philosophic writing of the East as well as of

[1] While the Sage Sri Ramana peruses such correspondence as is placed before him, he himself does not reply to it in writing.

the West. The greatest peculiarity and merit of Sri Ramana Maharshi's life is that although he has moulded and perfected his personality on the lines of ***Advaita Vedanta,*** a purely Indian way of Self-Realization, he is highly appreciated and resorted to by Western seekers and by those Indians who have been educated on Western lines. One of the reasons for this fact may be that some English and French writers[1] happened to praise him highly in their books. But the fact remains to be explained why these Western seekers were themselves so well impressed by the Maharshi. Mere publicity does not in the least establish the greatness of saints, although it may make them known, as in the case of Jesus Christ, to wider public. Ramana Maharshi's greatness is more deeply founded. It is based on his actual living by the creed of the ***Advaita Vedanta*** which holds that Reality is One without a second, that everything in this universe is but that Reality which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. True to his creed, he regards nothing alien, none as other, no event as undesirable. For him the ideal is the real and the real is the ideal. He has no other relation with anybody but that of Love. He thinks as much of others as he thinks of himself. Love, affection, kindness, mercy etc. which are expressions of one and the same thing, and the feeling of unity with all, ever flow from him. This is the secret of Maharshi's unique greatness and consequent popularity. The whole of humanity owes its homage to this great Sage amidst us.



[1] The first Englishman to come into contact with Sri Maharshi was Mr. Frank Humphreys, and that took place about the year **1910.** For an inspiring account of the three interviews Mr. Humphreys had with Maharshi, the reader is directed to ***Self-Realisation or the Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*** (4th Edn.) Chapters XVII & XVIII.

MY ·HUMBLE TRIBUTE

TO

SAGE SRI RAMANA

By

Manu Subedar, M L. A. (Central)

It is a privilege to be invited to say something in praise of the great Sage and Teacher of Arunachalam and I shall be glad to pay my humble tribute to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. It will do great good to me to concentrate my thoughts on him and his teachings, because, for the Sage who is a Brahmanishta, censure and praise as well as all the other dualities and the intricate hold of the *gunas*, from which the common man cannot get free, have lost all meaning. In his case it is the same as Dattatreya, who says in the beginning of the *Avadhoota Gita* :—

येनेदं पूरितं सर्वमात्मनैवात्मनात्मनि ।
निराकारं कथं वन्दे ह्यभिन्नं शिवमव्ययम् ॥

> " How can I bow to Him, Who is Formless, Undifferentiated and Indestructible, Who is the essence of Bliss, and Who has through Himself by Himself and in Himself filled up everything."

The Maharshi's Realisation being of this order, what we say about him is of little concern to him. In his person, he has revealed the highest teachings that we have inherited. He has gone beyond not only the limits of thought, but the limits of experience.

For over three years I resisted the invitation of my friend, Mr. Shankerlal Banker, to go to Ramana Ashram. I pleaded with him that I was not ready; that "if I went into a very large shop, I would feel ashamed to come out with my hands empty." At last I decided that I would pay a visit and I prepared myself for about two months prior to that visit by reading nothing else except those two very outstanding books, viz. the *Ashtavakra Gita* and the *Avadhoota Gita*. After finish-

ing some work, which I had at Cochin, I set out for Tiruvannamalai. I decided that I should ask a few questions in order to solve some of my doubts and framed a few questions. I was alone in a car from Katpadi and wanted to go over my questions and revise them if necessary. As I formulated each question, I found that I knew the answer! So when I went and had the *Darshan* of the Maharshi, I had really no question to ask. I permitted myself to observe others and to absorb the elevating atmosphere of the Ashrama.

I presented to the Maharshi a commentary on the Gita by the sage Dnyandeo, a great Marathi classic, which I had rendered in English after eight years of effort. He was much pleased with it. I had with me extra copies of the *Avadhoota Gita* and the *Ashtavakra Gita* published by the Sastu Sahitya Mudranalaya Trust of Ahmedabad, of which I am the Chairman. I presented these also to the Maharshi. I mentioned that I had been reading these books and I drew his attention to the very first verse in the *Avadhoota Gita*, which is as follows:—

ईश्वरानुग्रहादेव पुंसामद्वैतवासना ।
महद्भयपरित्राणा विप्राणामुपजायते ॥

"It is only through the Grace of God that in men with knowledge is born a desire to experience cosmic unity (*Adwaita*), a desire which protects them from the great dangers of *samsara*."

I further drew his attention that most of the matter in these books was for the advanced *Siddha*, i.e., the adept. For new seekers, who were attempting to learn, there was not much of direct guidance. With infinite compassion in his eyes, the Maharshi looked at me and instructed one of his followers to bring a book. This was the *Maha Bhakta Vijayam* of Nabhaji. Bhagavan opened the book and began to read. (I noted with awe that the book opened exactly at the page where he intended to read.) This is a discourse between Dnyaneshwar Maharaj and his father, in which the young son, who has achieved Realisation, is arguing with his father, who is still afraid, still seeking, and still groping. The Maharshi seemed to relish reading the discourse. Those who were present thoroughly enjoyed the reading and I discovered that I was given exactly what I needed.* I am for ever grateful to the Sage

* The third edition of "Gita Explained" by Dnyaneshwar Maharaj (translated into English by Manu Subedar, Kodak House, Hornby Road, Bombay) contains an English translation of this discourse as an appendix.

for what he taught me. The best Teacher is he, who takes you from where you are to the next stage. It is not the totality of the Teacher's knowledge, which the pupil must consider, but the appropriateness of that which is imparted at the proper moment.

As a rule, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi speaks little. But there is spiritual communication and kindliness in his look, eliciting what is best in a person. His presence during the silent hour acts as a catalyst, enabling the concentration of every person's spiritual yearning and zest. There is grace and benignity in the way he looks at the devotees as a mother looks at her children.

In the Indian tradition there is a silent look known as कूर्मदृष्टि (*Kurma Drishti*). The full meaning of this is realised only by those who have benefited themselves by a visit to Ramanasramam. The look, which the Maharshi gives you, is a question. At least I felt like it so. The question is: "I see a unity, but you keep grasping at the variety. Why don't you know yourself properly and realise your true Self? You can then march on to the realisation of the unity of self with the Self." Nothing is so helpful as the august presence of the Maharshi for those who seriously intend to progress in the spiritual path. The Grace of God, without which progress is impossible, comes not merely invisibly, but through the presence of the pure and great sages, who during the balance of their physical life have no other purpose than the dissemination of Knowledge, offer of kindly help and friendly guidance. It is the Maharshi's teachings and his presence, which proclaim to the world that knowing oneself and realising the Truth is the highest purpose and function of life. Self-knowledge deserves exclusive pursuit in preference to everything else. It is infinitely more important than anything else.

To be in the Sage's presence is for most of us to have a kindly rebuke that progress on the spiritual path is regarded as an intermittent hobby to be undertaken when there is leisure from worldly pursuits. To put it mildly, it is a reproach to our moral being to take interest in spiritual matters only as a pose, and to indulge in it as if it were a supplement to our activities in life. Even when a man slackens in his pursuit of selfish objects for the advancement of his own career and attends *partly* to the service of others, he stands justly reprimanded in the presence of the Maharshi for dereliction of the highest duty, namely, the gaining of true knowledge of oneself.

Spiritual realisation is not less difficult than the accomplishment of any other task in life, and the general experience is that people content themselves with a superficial performance of outside duties and ceremonials. If they go a little further, they are tired and they are in search for some excuse to stop. They often make an attempt in the wrong direction half-heartedly and without concentration, and then they get exhausted. They have a vague idea that there is something high and noble, but they modestly disclaim fitness for the great task. The final excuse, in which the slackness of many devotees expresses itself, is that they are now engaged in the service of others! They owe it to others to raise their status. They argue that those who have an advantage in the matter of health, intelligence and resources must help others who are not equally well-placed in life. This is also the form which doubt (संशय) often takes. It is fatal. The Maharshi, in his teachings, has made it quite plain that the pretence of doing good to others is a snare. It is more important, he teaches, to know oneself and to realise the true meaning of that which is. Who is asking the question, "Should I not serve the world at large?" Who is watching in you, while you put the question? Who is to answer the question? It is the final 'I', which is the self, and it stands in direct relation with the universal Self. The Maharshi has said "There are no *others.*" The Maharshi teaches that there is a cosmic existence with the common thread of life running through all individuals, persons and things. There is only one Element. There is only one Power, That which a seeker feels he is out to accomplish for the welfare of others is but a phase of this common existence. That Power, which is functioning here, is functioning everywhere. That, which animates one person, animates the whole universe. That Being is supreme. He is the repository of all accomplishments. He encompasses all ends. It is better to pursue the path of the Self than to seek other ends, because nothing happens except through the Will of the *Paramatman.*

Or sometimes that seeker has a sort of spiritual experience, which he seeks to understand and stabilize. He formulates a question and puts it to the Maharshi. The Sage clarifies the position in such a way that he not only removes all doubt from the seeker's mind but also imparts new faith and conviction. Let me illustrate the above by a quotation from "Maharshi's Gospel" (Book I).

Question: One has at times vivid flashes of a consciousness whose centre is *outside* the normal *self*, and which seems to be all-inclusive. Without concerning ourselves with philosophical concepts, how would Bhagavan advise me to work towards *getting, retaining* and *extending* those rare flashes? Does *Abhyasa* in such experience involve *retirement*?

Maharshi: *Outside!* For whom is the inside or outside? Those can exist only so long as there are the subject and object. For whom are these two again? On investigation you will find that they resolve into the subject only. So, who is the subject? This enquiry leads you to pure Consciousness beyond the subject.

The *normal self* is the mind. This mind is with limitations. But pure Consciousness is beyond limitations, and is reached by investigation as above outlined.

Getting. The Self is always there. You have only to remove the veil obstructing the revelation of the Self.

Retaining. Once you realise the Self, it becomes your direct and immediate experience. It is never lost.

Extending. There is no extending of the Self, for it is as ever, without contraction or expansion.

Retirement. Abiding in the Self is solitude. Because there is nothing alien to the Self. Retirement must be from some one place or state to another. There is neither the one nor the other apart from the Self. *All* being the Self, retirement is impossible and inconceivable.

Abhyasa is only the prevention of disturbance to the inherent peace. You are always in your natural State whether you make *abhyasa* or not...... To remain without question or doubt is your natural State.

Compare the following from the *Ashtavakra Gita*:

श्रद्धस्व तात श्रद्धस्व नात्र मोहं कुरुष्व भोः ।
ज्ञानस्वरूपो भगवानात्मा त्वं प्रकृतेः परः ॥ 15 (8)

My son, have faith, have faith. Don't get confused. You are above creation. You are in the form of Realisation, you are the Lord, you are the Self.

There are teachers who mystify in order to impress the pupil. Sri Ramana Maharshi on the contrary has the direct method. He discloses the truth and the whole truth in the simplest form in which he has not only formulated it as a thought, but lived it as an experience. Consider carefully the following:—

Question: Does my Realization help others?

Maharshi: Yes, and it is the best help that you can possibly render to others. Those who have discovered great truths have done so in the still depths of the Self. But really there are no 'others' to be helped. For the Realized Being sees only the Self, just as the goldsmith sees only the gold, while valuing it in various jewels made of gold. When you identify yourself with the body, name and form are there. But when you transcend the body-consciousness the 'others' also disappear. The Realized One does not see the world as different from Himself.

Question: Would it not be better if the Saints mix with others?

Maharshi: There are no 'others' to mix with. The Self is the only Reality.

Question: Should I not try to help the suffering world?

Maharshi: The power that created you has created the world as well. If It can take care of you, It can similarly take care of the world also.........If God has created the world, it is His business to look after it, not yours.

Question: Is it not our duty to be patriots?

Maharshi: Your duty is TO BE, and not to be this or that. 'I AM THAT I AM' sums up the whole truth; the method is summarized in "BE STILL".

And what does Stillness mean? It means 'Destroy yourself'; because every name and form is the cause of trouble. 'I-I' is the Self. 'I am this' is the ego. When the 'I' is kept up as the 'I' only, it is the Self. When it flies off at a tangent and says, 'I am this or that, I am such and such,' it is the ego.

Question: Who then is God?

Maharshi: The Self is God. 'I AM' is God. If God be apart from ths Self, He must be a Self-less God, which is absurd.

All that is required to realize the Self is to BE STILL. What can be easier than that? Hence *Atma-Vidya* is the easiest to attain.

Compare with this the following from the *Ashtavakra Gita*:

अहो भुवनकल्लोलैर्विचित्रैर्द्राक्समुत्थितम् ।
मय्यनन्तमहाम्भोधौ चित्तवाते समुद्यते ॥ 2 (23)

In me, who am the ocean of infinity, the wind in the form of mind is blowing and suddenly numerous waves arise in the form of this world.

मय्यनन्तमहाम्भोधौ चित्तवाते प्रशाम्यति ।
अभाग्याज्जीववणिजो जगत्पोतो विनश्वरः ॥ 2 (24)

In me, who am the ocean of infinity, the wind in the form of the mind stops blowing and the ship in the form of this world belonging to the merchant in the form of *jiva* is, unfortunately wrecked.

मय्यनन्तमहाम्भोधावाश्चर्यं जीववीचयः ।
उद्यन्ति घ्नन्ति खेलन्ति प्रविशन्ति स्वभावतः ॥ 2 (25)

It is marvellous that in me, who am the ocean of infinity, many waves in the form of *jiva*, arise through their own tendency, rise, dash against one another, play and subside.

मय्यनन्तमहाम्भोधौ विश्वपोत इतस्ततः ।
भ्रमति स्वांतवातेन न ममास्त्यसहिष्णुता ॥ 7 (1)

In me, the ocean of infinity, the ship in the form of this universe, moves hither and thither impelled by the wind in the form of the mind.

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मय्यनन्तमहाम्भोधौ जगद्वीचिः स्वभावतः।
उदेतु वाऽस्तमायातु न मे वृद्धिर्न च क्षतिः॥ 7 (2)

I am neither increased nor diminished when waves in the form of this world arise or calm down in me, who am the ocean of infinity.

मय्यनन्तमहाम्भोधौ विश्वं नाम विकल्पना।
अतिशान्तो निराकार एतदेवाहमास्थितः॥ 7 (3)

In me, who am the ocean of infinity, the world is born of imagination. But I stand where I am, perfectly calm and formless.

It is the high distinction of India to have produced sages who have risen to the highest stature in this land, because the atmosphere created by the old traditions and teachings is favourable to such growth. The West has failed in its thought-processes beyond a certain point, with the result that the moral direction needed both for individuals and for human groups, has been lacking there. This conclusion is clearly indicated in the age of the atom bomb. The relation of man with his Maker is better understood in India than anywhere else in the world. In one sense, during the last five thousand years, there is very little new, which has been added to what can be called the *Brahma Vidya*. It cannot be otherwise, since truth to be the Truth is eternal; when realised, it is realised in its perfection. But books and book-knowledge alone will not help. A man may die in a chemist's shop, if he does not know which medicine is good, though he is in the midst of every kind of medicine. But even the knowledge of the right medicine is not enough; he must take it in and make it a part of his system. Then alone will the ailment go.

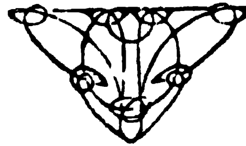
Every age produces in India its outstanding *Yogis* and Teachers. They shed their light wherever they are and guide others to the true path. They keep the torch of spiritual experience burning and pass the light to others just as they received it. Every student of *Adhyatma Vidya* knows that at every stage he needs the kindness and the blessings of someone who is advanced. It is really a divine favour, but it is given through someone. Sri Ramana Maharshi is one who bestows this favour on whoever is ready to take it. Seeds may be sown all over, but they will sprout only where other conditions are favourable.

Is Sri Ramana an *Avatara*? It is a tempting question to put, but who is to decide? How many recognized Sri Rama and accepted him as an *Avatara* in his life-time? In the case of Sri Krishna, was it not the humbler men like Sudhama, Vidura and Uddhava who knew him, rather than his lofty contemporaries? **यावानर्थं उदपाने तावान् संप्लुतोदके** is but a truism. Those who wish to benefit themselves, do not need anything more than what the Sage of Arunachala offers. As for those whose curiosity is irrepressible, let them remember that the final knowledge of all that He (*Paramatman*) is, is only known to Himself. Let me quote from *Avadhoota Gita*:

मनो वचो यत्र न शक्तमीरितुं नूनं कथं तत्र गुरूपदेशता ।
इमां कथामुक्तवतो गुरोस्तद्युक्तस्य तत्त्वं हि समं प्रकाशते ॥ 2 (40)

Where words and mind cannot reach and encompass, there how can the Teacher teach the Truth? It is only when a Teacher, who has been through the experience and who has realised, tells his story, that the light of the Self, Who is acting simultaneously and is common in all, shines forth.

This would be realised by any one who has "prepared" himself and who pays a visit to Sri Ramana Maharshi. I humbly bow to this great Sage.



THE GRANDEUR OF ADVAITA

By
Olivier Lacombe
(L'Attaché Culturel, Consulat Général de France, Calcutta.)

The visit I had the honour to pay in May 1936 to Tiruvannamalai was only a short one. It was long enough, anyhow, to impress me with a strong feeling that I had met there, for a few moments, with a genuine *Vidvan*, an exceptionally true representative of Hindu spirituality.

As my souvenirs from this visit have already been published in a French catholic review, *Les Etudes Carmelitaines*, I shall have to give to the present reflexions a more impersonal character.

* * * * * *

Any student of the history of Indian thought is bound to be struck by the congeniality of the Maharshi's experiences to the traditional *advaitic* doctrine. But more remarkable even is the almost purely spontaneous character of this congeniality, without a *guru*, without any regular '*sastric* training, without study' (1), Sri Ramana Maharshi has, from his early years, gone through a series of psycho-spiritual experiences that are as old as the Upanishads; and after having rediscovered by himself these traditional data, he later was in no difficulty to express them in terms essentially consonant with the most strict *advaitavada.*

Now, the power of appeal of the *advaitic* doctrine is mainly to be found in the uncompromising, nay drastic, purity with which it declares absolute Being and Consciousness to be infinitely above the possibility of any internal division or external dependence, and spiritual life to spring from within ourselves.

I would like to stress that the teaching of the Sage Ramana, by its aphoristic character, as well as because of the intense personality of

(1) The dislike of the child Ramana for all knowledge learnt from books is a well-known fact, and, even now, although the Maharshi answers the definition of a *vidvan,* he has none of the characters of a *pandit* or a *sastrin.*

its author, enhances to the highest pitch this common feature of the whole *advaitic* tradition.

Let us compare, in this respect, the Maharshi's spiritual way with a passage from the Chhandogya Upanishad in which Prajapati endeavours to lead Indra to the supreme spiritual goal by skilfully using a method of gradual approach and successive removals of all obstructive illusions.

Indra, from among the *Devas* and Virochana in the name of the *Asuras* come "into the presence of Prajapati, fuel in hand" (1) in order to "search out that Self, the Self by searching out whom one obtains all worlds and all desires" (2),...... "the Self which is free from evil, is ageless, deathless, sorrowless ...... " (3)

For thirty-two years the two live the life of *brahmacharya*. Then Prajapati says to them: "That Person who is seen in the eye (or in water or in a mirror) — He is the Self...... That is the immortal, the fearless. That is Brahman." (4)

The disciples are satisfied and go. But Indra, even before reaching the gods, saw this danger: "Just as, indeed, that one (i.e., the supposed self that can be perceived in a mirror) is well-ornamented when this body is well-ornamented......, even so that one is blind when it is blind...... It perishes immediately upon the perishing of this body. I see nothing enjoyable in this." (5)

He comes back to Prajapati and lives with him for another thirty-two years. He is then taught that "He who moves about happy in a dream — he is the Self....... That is the immortal, the fearless. That is Brahman."

Indra takes leave with tranquil heart. But a few moments later a doubt creeps in his mind. The self of the dream is free from the defects of the gross body, but he is not free from the miseries he dreams of. He cannot be the true Self.

Thirty-two years later, Prajapati addresses him again: "Now, when one is sound asleep, composed, serene, and knows no dream—that is the Self." (6)

(1)	Chhandogya Upanishad, VIII.	7—2 —	Hume's translation	2nd edition, 1934.
(2)	do	do	do	do
(3)	do	7—1 —	do	do
(4)	do	7—4 —	do	do
(5)	do	9—1 —	do	do
(6)	do	11—1 —	do	do

Indra is not yet satisfied with this doctrine. This self of the dreamless sleep-state appears to him as unconscious and therefore as not blissful.

Prajapati promises to teach him the ultimate truth about the Self after five years, at the end of which, that is to say, one hundred and one years since the first visit of Indra, he so speaks:

"O Maghavan, verily, this body is mortal. It has been appropriated by Death. (But) it is the standing ground of that deathless, bodiless Self. Verily, he who is incorporate has been appropriated by pleasure and pain. Verily, there is no freedom from pleasure and pain for one while he is incorporate. Verily, while one is bodiless, pleasure and pain do not touch him...... (1) He obtains all worlds and all desires who has found out and who understands that Self." (2)

Such is the traditional way through which all infatuations and illusions are gradually cancelled, with the result that, in the end, the Self alone remains, unique and without a second. Let us now listen to the report of young Ramana's realization of the Self.

"Who or what is it that dies? It is this visible body that dies; the kinsmen come and take it away and burn it to ashes. But when this body dies, shall I also die? That depends on what I really am. If I be the body, then when it dies, I also would die; but if I be not this, then I would survive." (3)

Such were Ramana's reflexions at the age of sixteen.

"Then there arose in his mind an over-powering desire to find out, *then and there*, whether he—the real Self of him—would survive after death. And it occurred to him that the surest way to find it out would be to enact the process of death. This he did by *imagining* that the body was dead. A dead body does not speak nor breathe; nor has it any sensation; all this he imagined with such perfect realism, that his body became inert and rigid just like a corpse; his vital energies were withdrawn from it and gathered into the mind, which now turned inwards, animated by the will to find the real Self.........At this moment a mysterious power rose up from the innermost core of his being and took complete possession of the whole mind and life; by that

(1) Chhandogya Upanishad, VIII. 12—1 — Hume's translation, 2nd edition, 1934.
(2) do 12—6 — do do
(3) *Maha Yoga or the Upanishadic Lore in the light of the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana*, p. 6.

power he—that is to say, his mind and life—was taken inwards........ All this happened while he was wide awake, and therefore he became aware of his own Real Self, free from all thought-movement; this Self was free from the bondage of desires and fears and therefore full of peace and happiness." (1)

Undoubtedly, this is a genuine *advaitic* realization, but how much condensed (2) and full of energy: one stroke of will, if I may say so, and all that is not the Self is eliminated.

The Maharshi's method, in its entirety, is comprised within this simple interrogation: "Who am I?" With him, three words only are enough to sum up the long traditional description of the way to liberation. "Lo, verily, it is the Self that should be seen, that should be hearkened to, that should be thought on, that should be pondered on..." (3). In conformity with this Upanishadic text, the Vedantic tradition insists on the preparatory stages of the spiritual quest, and considers mediate knowledge, reflexion (*manana*) upon the major utterances of the *sruti*, either positive (*aham Brahmasmi, tattvamasi*) or negative (*neti, neti...*), as a *normal*—if not always necessary—step towards the realization of the Self. The Sage of Arunachala admits, or rather concedes that "to mediate 'This is not I' or 'That I am' *may be an aid...*" (4). But, as he himself reached the goal almost without such an aid, he does not feel bound to stress its importance or to deem it as a *normal* stage in the process of salvation.

It is, perhaps, the startling simile of the "diver" that expresses most vividly the Maharshi's original method:

"As one who dives, seeking to find something which has fallen into water, so must one dive inwards with one pointed mind, checking the speech and breath, and find the place from which the uprising 'I' originates." (5)

(1) Maha Yoga p.p. 6. 7.

(2) Notice the expression "*then and there*" that we have italicised in the above quoted text.

(3) *Brihad Aranyaka Up.* II. 4, 5. Hume's transl.

(4) *Ulladu-Narpadu*, or *Sad-Vidya*, page 29. We have italicised the words: *may be an aid.*

(5) Ulladu-Narpadu, Page 28.

"The path of Knowledge (*Jnana-marga*) is only to dive inwards with the mind, not uttering the word "I" and (with the mind) to question whence as I it rises.... " (1)

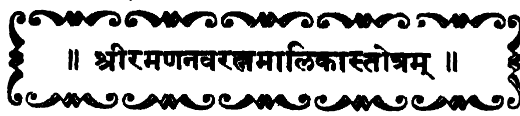
The diver does not linger scrutinizing the horizon; he is not interested in the changing scene that plays on the surface of the sea. He knows only one dimension: the dimension of depth; one movement: the vertical dive; one environment: the "inner-ness" of the infinite abyss; one goal on which he totally concentrates (*ekagra*): the extensionless spot, the absolute non-duality of the Self, wherefrom surges the principle of the finite "ego" and of all mundane misery.

* * * * * *

The *advaitavada* is a grand doctrine; Sri Ramana Maharshi's *advaitic* message is, at the same time, true to that grandeur and original. As an historian of Indian culture, I have tried, by the above few remarks, to throw light on this twofold merit, with full intellectual and human sympathy. As a Christian philosopher, I feel still more deeply moved when recognizing in their teaching some momentous metaphysical truths so earnestly pursued, so sincerly realized by the greater *advaitavadins* throughout ages: I cannot, therefore, but regard that, for fear of a relapse in the dreaded nets of multiplicity, they deliberately overlook the no less supreme and absolute character of some other truths and values the provisional acknowledgement of which as valid on the superior plane of *Bhakti* but not on the supreme plane of *Vidya*, is after all only a delayed cancellation.

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(1) Ulladu Narpadu - Page 29.



A NECKLET OF NINE GEMS IN PRAISE OF SRI RAMANA

ज्योतिर्लिङ्गमयारुणाद्रिकटके चित्रं महामान्त्रिकः
कश्चिद्दीप्यति सच्चिदात्मनिरतो विश्वात्मवश्यः सुधीः ।
मायोच्चाटन-मोहमोहन-जडाविद्वज्जनस्तंभन-
क्रोधद्वेषण-जन्ममारण-महासंपत्समाकर्षणैः ॥ १ ॥

1. Marvellous is the Great Magician Who lives on the sides of Arunadri resplendent as the *Jyotirlinga*! Absorbed in the Self of Being-Consciousness, He shines forth in all His glory. By wise incantation He subdues the whole world; drives away illusion (*maya*); charms away delusion; arrests the foolishness and ignorance of men; makes anger hate itself; destroys rebirths; and attracts the highest affluence to His Presence!

कलावप्येतस्मिन् रमणमुनिपुण्याश्रमपदे
द्विजाद्या विश्रान्ताः क्षुदपहरणावश्यमनसः ।
निकामं सन्तृप्ताः क्षपितकलुषा वन्दनवशात्
कृतार्था गच्छन्ति प्रतिदिनमवाप्ताखिलसुखाः ॥ २ ॥

2. Even in this age of *Kali*, here in the holy *Asrama* of Sage Sri Ramana all beings from the twice-born* down to the lowest in creation eager to appease their hunger are daily fed to their satisfaction. By prostrating themselves before Sri Bhagavan they become free from desires, are contended and are made free from blemishes.

* The phrase 'twice-born' refers to Brahmins as well as to birds.

|| श्रीरमणनवरत्नमालिकास्तोत्रम् ||

अरुणगिरिनितम्बादर्शसङ्क्रान्तनाक-
प्रतिकृति रमणीये सुन्दरे मन्दिरेऽस्मिन् ।
सुरपतिरिव दाता नन्दने मान्यमानो
रमणमुनिवरोऽयं भाति लोकोत्तरात्मा || ३ ||

3. As though the mirror of Arunachala's slopes, reflecting heaven on earth, the Sage's lovely *Asrama* looks like a heavenly pleasure-garden; and here the divine Sage Sri Ramana shines supreme in his munificent glory like Indra there in heaven.

मोहध्वान्तनिवारणे तपनतामाह्लादने चन्द्रतां
क्षेमे मङ्गलतां विनम्रजनतासन्दर्शने सौम्यताम् ।
सच्छास्त्रे गुरुतां विवादकवितां दोषग्रहे मन्दतां
विज्ञाने सति केतुतां च रमणो योगी भजन्भासते || ४ ||

4. The great Yogi Sri Ramana shines with the glory of all the planets in controlling the destiny of men, — as the Sun in driving away the darkness of ignorance, the Moon for imparting joy, Mars for giving security, Mercury for making himself known to the humble, Jupiter for right knowledge, Venus for right argument, Saturn slow in fault-finding, and Ketu for Supreme Knowledge.

इतोऽरुणगिरीश्वरः सकलवस्तुपूर्णो महा-
नितः कुसुमवाटिका परिमलप्रसूतिक्षमा ।
इतः शुभजलाशयः सकलदाहशान्त्या गुरुः
स्फुटं रमणसद्गुरो तव विभाति पुण्याश्रमः || ५ ||

5. O Master, Ramana, Your holy *Asrama* is well-situated, — flanked on one side by the bounteous, magnificent Aruna Hill; on another side by a garden rich in lovely and fragrant flowers; and yet on another side by a pure water-tank to quench the thirst of all.

गतागतिषु विह्वलं मम कलेबरं दुर्बलं
मनोपि बहुमन्दितं श्रुतिगणाः परं विस्मृताः ।
परास्थविरता गता नयनमप्रकाशं ततो
जडोऽस्मि विबुधोप्यहं रमणसद्गुरो पाहि माम् || ६ ||

6. As for myself, my body is weak and shakes while walking; my mind has grown very dull; the Vedic *mantras* I have forgotten; old age has overtaken me; and my eyes are dim. Though learned, I remain ignorant. O *Sad-Guru* Ramana, save me!

उपर्युपरि मानसं विषयवासनोज्जृंभणा-
दनात्मनिरतं श्ववत्तत इतो वृथा धावति ।
निबध्य करुणागुणैः स्ववशमद्य कृत्वा क्षणं
स्वयं रमणसद्गुरो नियतमात्मसंस्थं कुरु ॥ ७ ॥

7. Owing to its latencies being unfolded more and more, in vain the mind runs after worthless objects like a dog going here and there. Bind it instantly, O *Sad-Guru* Ramana with cords of love, subdue it and take it to firm fixity in the Self.

मनो दहरसंस्थितं निजवपुःप्रभुं नेक्षते
वृथैव सकलेन्द्रियाधिपतिभावगर्वोद्धतम् ।
अहं न निजजीवितं परमवेक्ष्य सिद्धिं गतः
कदा रमणसद्गुरो मम निजात्मसन्दर्शनम् ॥ ८ ॥

8. Wantonly inflated by the pride of being the lord of all the senses, the mind does not see its true Lord seated in the heart. Till now, looking upon life as the ultimate, I have not achieved the Goal. Ah! when, *Sad-Guru* Ramana, shall I realise the Self?

इष्टं यद्यद्भुवि सुखमुखं वस्तु तत्तद्विनष्टं
क्लिष्टं चेतः सततविषयानन्दमात्रोपविष्टम् ।
शिष्टाराध्यं रमणभगवन् ब्रह्म नाप्तं विशिष्टं
भ्रष्टं जन्मोच्छ्वसति मम हा किं किमस्मादनिष्टम् ॥ ९ ॥

9. In the world what was pleasing has always perished. But the miserable mind ever runs after sense-pleasures only. O Ramana Bhagavan, I have not yet realised the Supreme Brahman adored by the eminent. This life is lived in vain. Alas! what greater misfortune can there be?

श्री सुन्दरानन्दस्वामिविरचितम् ॥ —*Sri Sundarananda Swami*

MY HUMBLE AND HEART-FELT HOMAGE
TO
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

William S. Spaulding (Jr.), New York City.

Though quite a few years have elapsed since I had the privilege of being in the presence of Sri Maharshi, the tremendous impression made on me at that time has remained undimmed.

I shall not discuss Maharshi's method of approach to full realisation, for that is well-known, though undoubtedly little understood. Rather, I would like to attempt to describe the impression that came over me as I sat in His presence for the first time. The most powerful impression was that of what I can only call an almost palpable "golden radiance", the visual effect of a tremendous spiritual force. There was an intense and subtle radiation that seems to flow from Him continually, — and once having sensed this, words, questions, technique of meditation, etc., seemed to dissolve immediately.

And to those unable to hear that 'ultimate Voice of Silence', their questions are answered with *simple* yet *shattering* clarity, sweeping away all dialectic and verbalism, uncovering the way that leads to the ultimate Source—the Self.

Maharshi also possesses to a high degree that quality described as "divine indifference", attributed to certain saints of the Christian church. This must not be taken to mean what is generally associated with the term "indifference", but rather as a beneficent, unfettered out-pouring of the healing radiation of a realized Being.

Additional words would in no way give a clearer conception of that great person, Sri Maharshi. Let those who can not fail to take advantage of the blessed opportunity of going to the Holy Hill of Arunachala to experience the rare instance of contact with One who has reached the high pinnacle of pure Being.

MY VISIT TO MAHARSHI

THE GREATEST EVENT IN MY LIFE

By

Grant Duff (Douglas Ainslie.)

I had first become interested in India on perusing my grandfather's *History of the Mahrattas*, which is still read by many and is regarded as a classic of its kind. Though not actually, I believe, styled Governor, he practically ruled that part of the ancient land for some years and became very much attached to the Mahrattas and to the Indian tradition in general.

In the early days of the 'eighties of last century, my uncle, the late Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, who was then Governor of Madras, asked me to come out to his place and stay there as long as I liked. This was just what I should have wished to do. But when I had read my uncle's letter triumphantly to my parents, after a brief consultation my father told me, to my amazement, that they could not allow me to go to India, owing to the climate of that country!

I mention these facts as they may serve to explain to some extent my curious mental position as regards India. I was on the one hand surrounded with the usual crowd of materialists and followers of Herbert Spencer when I was eighteen, and on the other I felt an obscure longing for something else which I knew existed somewhere else, but where I was not sure precisely, owing to the influences of Oxford teaching. There, at Oxford, I wasted my time taking a degree and doing little else but play about as I had done the previous four years at Eton with groups of shallow-minded youths one would often find in the higher classes in a school. Soon after I commenced my studies at Oxford, I felt the urge to write down some of the poetry that was surging within me, and published several volumes of verse besides sending poems to the magazines of the day. In the matter of attending social parties, etc., I was not quite as bad as Robert Browning, though I wasted lots of time that way.

Though the torch be inverted the flame
Will burn upward the same:
Though the name no longer be flame
But just man-in-the-mire,
He too will burn upward aspire
To the place whence he came:
For he too is fire
Of a quenchless desire.
Though the torch be inverted the flame
Will burn upward the same.

A good deal later there occurred an episode which has some bearing on the present subject of my quest for the Truth, how and where I ultimately found IT. I was a member of the aristocratic Union Club at Naples, where for the first time I came into contact with Benedetto Croce's writings. His philosophy of art and of the practical as also his logical studies interested me intensely. Unacquainted with anyone who could introduce me to the philosopher, I called upon him myself, to see what would happen next! Everything went splendidly when I had explained who I was and my love for philosophy of the idealistic sort which he practised. In the course of a few weeks I was already at work on his *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic.** This intercourse, though verbal and intellectual, with a great thinker did stimulate my interest in the things of the spirit, and I was always looking about for someone with a definite solution to the problem of the universe. While I was in this state of mind, athirst for a deeper understanding about life, the world and what they mean, I came to know of the Sage of the Hill of the Holy Beacon. It was the good Mr. Raphael Hurst who told me of the Holy One and the *Ashram* at Tiruvannamalai.

Eventually I found my way out there and had the greatest adventure of my life. Mark my words. I do not know what happened when I saw Maharshi for the first time, but the moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light. There could be no doubt about it, and all the doubts and speculations I had accumulated during the past many years disappeared in the Radiance of the Holy One.

* Since then published, together with the rest of his philosophical works, by Macmillans.

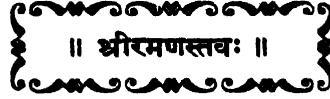
It is very difficult to describe in words the unanticipated change that came over me. Suffice it to say that, though my visits to the *Ashram* were brief, I felt that every moment I was there I was building up within me what could never be destroyed, whatever may happen to this body and mind.

A careful reading of the admirable biography of Sri Ramana Maharshi by B. V. Narasimhaswami revealed to me what I could never hope to know otherwise. I will only mention here just a very few of the points in which the Maharshi has particularly appealed to me. One of these is the extreme politeness and gentleness which always surrounds his least act. It is as though he is actually conscious of the frail beings whom he is addressing and avoiding the words that may cause them to be ashamed or to regret something that they had done. All the incidents in the above mentioned biography seem to me to illustrate this fact in relation to Maharshi,—his extraordinary insight into other beings combined with his marvellous gentleness. He sees and knows everything about all those who come before him but he is gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness, whereby he reaches his end with perfect ease and to the utmost benefit of the visitor.

The visit of Humphreys to the Maharshi is one of the most interesting incidents for us Europeans. It occurred over thirty-five years ago, yet the account he left of his visits to the Sage supplies all the details that are necessary. His concluding words are highly significant,— "It is wonderful what a difference it makes to have been in his Presence!" I must say the same from my personal experience. My visit to the Sage of Arunachala has been the greatest event in my life.

Any of those of the West who are still waiting and wondering would do well to pack their sack as quickly as possible and be off to India while there is yet time. What I feel personally is that so much has been done during the last ten years in the way of making known the Saviour of mankind that further comment is simply otiose.

———



SRI RAMANA-STAVA

जीवन्मुक्तस्त्वमेको रमणमुनिवर श्रेष्ठजन्मारुणाद्रा-
वेकान्ते दक्षिणास्यो भवसि समतया पामरप्राणिवर्गैः।
धन्यैः शिष्यैः स्वभक्तै र्विनमितवदनै राहृताहारवस्तु-
स्वीकाराद्वीरधीरः सरसबुधमणिः स्वात्मनिष्ठाधुरीणः ॥ १ ॥

1. The unique Being, liberated during life, O Ramana, you are the foremost among sages and the best of men. Living in solitude on the slopes of Arunachala and looking on all with equality you become Lord Dakshinamurti. Surrounded by fortunate disciples and devotees and graciously accepting the food respectfully offered by them, you remain the most valiant among heroes, the wisest of the wise, the jewel among blissful Knowers and the chief among those fixed in the Self !

यः शुद्धस्वात्मतेजःप्रतिफलितशिवाद्वैतविद्यास्वरूपे
सोऽहंभावानुभुत्या ज्वलति परिवृतो भक्तसंघैरभिज्ञैः।
आत्मारामः स एको रमण इति महान् भासमानोऽरुणाद्रौ
तिष्ठन्त्यन्ये महान्तः कति कति कृतिनः सिद्धसिद्धिः कुतोऽन्यः ॥ २ ॥

2. His own pure Self being clearly reflected in the transcendental Self of non-dual Knowledge, realising "I am He", and surrounded by groups of discerning devotees, Ramana, the Great One, shines peerless, rejoicing in the Self. There are also many other worthy men living on the slopes of Arunachala. But who else but he has realised the Self?

ध्यानाज्जीवः शिवश्चेद्रमणगुरुगिरा सत्यमस्त्वेवमन्यः
साक्षी कोऽप्यावयोः सः पर इति सति चेद्ब्रह्मभावे प्रभूते।
सत्योत्थानानुभूत्या मृदि कनकमिवापारचैतन्यमेकं
किं वा सद्दर्शनोक्त्या सदसदुभयगं नैकमद्वैतमन्यत् ॥ ३ ॥

3. According to the words of the Master, Ramana, by meditation the *jiva* is identified with Siva. Be it so. When duality arises as "I am this and He is Siva", who can be their witness? Like gold recovered from sand, Infinite Knowledge arises from experience of Reality. Is it one? As said in *Sat-Darshana*, It pervades both the real and unreal, It is neither one nor dual, but beyond.

स्वात्मज्ञानं पुरस्ताद्विरतिमथ महावाक्यसारानुभूतिं
सिद्धप्राह्यां समाधिं परिहृतसकलारिष्टशान्तिप्रसादम् ।
सोपानोक्त्या महर्षेः प्रियवचनरसात्सत्यमित्थं सतीव
प्रायो मोक्षप्रसंगे श्रुतिरधिकविधं मार्गमाहप्रवीणा ॥ ४ ॥

4. First discriminating the Self from the non-self; then practising dispassion and, according to the holy texts, gaining direct Knowledge of the identity of the Self with the Supreme Being, thus passing into Repose (*Samadhi*)—the state realised only by sages, pain-free and of perfect Peace—such is the order of development according to the sweet and loving words of the Maharshi. In the matter of Liberation the *Vedas* also say the same thing, in greater detail and more comprehensively (e. g., *karma*, *yoga*, *upasana*, *Jnana*, *pitriloka*, *devayana*, *satyaloka* etc.)

विद्यालाभप्रहर्षा दसमसुखशिवब्रह्मनिष्ठानुभूति
र्यस्याविद्याप्रकर्षाज्जनिततनुजगज्जीवमोहानुभूतिः ।
एतद्द्वन्द्वप्रणाशे सति रमणपरंज्योतिरेकं समाधौ
तस्याधिष्ठानमात्रं स्वयमयमहमित्यद्वयं भाति पूर्णम् ॥ ५ ॥

5. The Joy of Supreme Knowledge arising, to be fixed in the unequalled Bliss of transcendental Brahman—or in ignorance to have the illusion of body, *jiva* and *jagat*—when both these states disappear, the Substratum alone is left and it is perfect Repose (*Samadhi*). There then the unique, non-dual, perfect, transcendental Glory—called Ramana—shines forth as "I am This!"

ज्योतिर्लिङ्गादहं प्राग्रमण परिवृतः शान्तिलाभात्सुखाढ्यः
सन्तोषात्संनिवृत्तस्त्वदनुमतिवशाद्वासरम्याश्रमेऽस्मिन् ।

सतत्यायुः सपञ्चप्रथितमपिगतं किं किमास्ते निधानं
सुक्ष्मप्रज्ञाप्रवेशात्त्वमयमहमिति व्योम्नि कालं नयामि ॥ ६ ॥

6. Seeing Ramana and Arunachala, I gained peace and was overcome with joy. With your permission happily I returned to this fine place, Vyasasrama. Now I am 75, but have not practised any kind of *sadhana*. Yet some unknown light has entered into me. Possessed by it, in Chidambaram I am passing my days, feeling "Thou art this I."

मत्तः कोवारुणाद्रौ रमणमुनिवर व्यक्तसारोपदेश-
स्पष्टज्ञानाम्बुसेकप्रशिथिलकठिनापारमायाज्वरोऽन्यः ।
सोऽहं हंसस्त्वदीयं परमशिवसुखप्राप्तिमूलं पदं द्रा-
ग्विन्यस्यान्तर्गुहायामुचितकृतिमतिः सुन्दरस्त्वन्मयोऽस्मि ॥ ७ ॥

7. Who else but me can have the hard and impassable illusion destroyed, as it is washed away by the inspiring words of wisdom pronounced unequivocally by the great Sage, Ramana, of Arunachala? O Self Supreme, enshrining at once in my heart your holy feet, the source of Supreme Bliss, and with a well-disciplined mind, I, Sundara, have been transformed into your Being.

यस्य ब्रह्माण्डभाण्डान्तरितरविशशिस्वर्गसत्योर्ध्वमाया
ज्योतिर्लोकान्तरालभ्रमणवशगतक्लेशनाशस्पृहास्ति ।
तस्य ज्योतिर्गिरीन्द्रस्थितरमणहृदाकाशमध्यस्थवस्तु-
ज्ञानावाप्तिप्रसादस्फुटघटितदृढस्वात्मविस्फूर्तिरस्तु ॥ ८ ॥

8. To him who is eager to be free from migrating after death to the regions of the Sun, the Moon, Brahma, etc., may there arise Knowledge of the Self in the heart-cavity, by the Grace of Sri Ramana of shining Arunagiri, and unbroken fixity in the Self!

ये ये शोणाद्रिसिद्धं रमण मनुसरन्त्यर्थवाङ्कर्मकायै-
स्ते ते मुक्ता भवन्ति प्रबलभवभयाच्छास्त्रविज्ञानहीनाः ।
कः सन्देहः परेषां घनमननवतां प्राणिनां मोक्षमार्गे
दुःखापाये वसिष्ठान्वयभवरमणब्रह्मनिष्ठे वरिष्ठे ॥ ९ ॥

9. Those who by body, mind and possessions serve Sri Ramana, the Sage of Sonagiri, are, notwithstanding their ignorance of scriptures liberated from the great fear of transmigration. What doubt can there be for liberation from the misery of transmigration for others who can steadily meditate upon the most excellent scion of Vasishtha's line, Ramana, ever fixed in Brahman?

भो भो भिक्षो कुतोवाऽरुणगिरिकटकात्तत्र कोवा विशेषः
कश्चित्सिद्धो दयालू रमण इति सतां भुक्तिमुक्तिप्रदाता।
कस्मादेवं गुणोऽसौ दृढनिजतपसैवेश्वरज्ञानसिद्ध्या
मुग्धो द्रष्टुं गमिष्याम्यहमपि तरसा तादृशं योगिराजम् ॥ १० ॥

10. *Question*: O Bhikshu, wherefrom are you coming?

Answer: From the slopes of Arunagiri.

Q. What special attraction is there?

A. There lives Ramana, a Sage, very kind, who bestows on the deserving prosperity in this life and liberation after death.

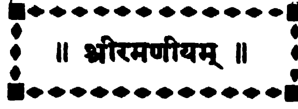
Q. How did he become so?

A. Only by Supreme Knowledge gained through great *tapas*. Till now ignorant, I too shall directly go there to see so great a Sage.

श्लोकैरेभिः समग्रं दशभिरभिनवं सुन्दरोक्तं स्तवेन्द्रं
सायंप्रातः पठन्तः परिहृतकलुषाः सिद्धिमन्तो मनुष्याः।
यावज्जीवं धरण्यामपरिमितसुखं प्राप्य देहावसाने
ज्योतिर्लिङ्गाश्रितश्रीरमणमुनिवरप्राभवाद्भान्ति सिद्धाः ॥

Those who everyday in the morning and evening read this excellent stotra *of ten verses composed by Sundara, will be made free from sins, will gain Self-Knowledge, will live here absolutely happy and, after death, by the Grace of Ramana of Arunachala, they will shine forth Perfect.*

श्री-सुन्दरानन्दस्वामिप्रणीतम् —*Sundarananda Swami*



IN PRAISE OF SRI RAMANA

वन्देऽरुणगिरिशिखरे द्वितीयमरुणाचलेशमिव भान्तम् ।
आनन्दतुन्दिलं श्री -रमणमहर्षीन्द्रयोगीन्द्रम् ॥

1. Salutations to Sri Ramana who, being the best of Maharshis and *yogins* and overflowing with Bliss, shines on the heights of Arunagiri even like another Lord Arunachala.

स जयति रमणयतीन्द्रो निजानुभूत्या प्रसन्नात्मा ।
वियदिव यस्य न चेतो भौतिकदोषानुबन्धिनिर्मुक्तम् ॥

2. Victorious is He, Ramana, the Prince of Ascetics, lit up with His own experience of Reality with His mind free, and, like space, untainted by matter.

गिरिरिव गिरिमूर्धन्यप्रकम्प्यस्वभावो
हर इव हरपार्श्वे स्वेक्षयाप्लुष्टकामः ।
सततमपि गुहायां भावयन्स्वं गुहास्थं
जयति रमणयोगी श्रेयसे स्वाश्रितानाम् ॥

3. On the height of a hill and with nature firm as a hill, like another Siva by the side of Siva, by whose sight Kama was burnt to ashes, in the Cave and ever at one with the Lord of the Heart-Cave, Ramana lives glorious, for the highest good of those who seek shelter in him.

महामहोपाध्याय महाकवि
श्री-लक्ष्मणसूरिविरचितम्

Mahamahopadhyaya Mahakavi
Sri Lakshmana Suri

WHY WE COME TO THEE SAGE SRI RAMANA

Can we, Sage, ever give a name
To the Self that in our depths we want?
Can we, Fate's puppets, own to shame
Because we are so ignorant?

Not knowing of life's goal supreme
We thrill in Vanity's displays,
With tongue deny the heart-lit Gleam!
When have fools worshipped Wisdom's ways?

In such an age of darkness Thou
Art come to meet us with Thy Light
Inscrutable — which is Thy plough
Wherewith wilt Thou disturb our Night

Of make-believes and vanities
And sow the seeds of ultimate Sight!
We say 'tis mad, yet bend our knees
To Thee, and, awed by Thy lone height,

We sing: "Truth wins to victory
Through aspiration's hopeless climb;
Life's din melts in soul's symphony
Through disciplines which seldom rhyme

With Reason's feeble yes and no
Or weakling safety's whisperings;
Only strong faith may take in tow
The storm tossed mind's imaginings."

We, life's dupes, tremble when comes Thy
Unfaltering courage to tell us this
That the ego achieves white harmony
When it leaves concupiscence for bliss.

Yet the blue of bliss we crave, when dark
Looms this our world of chains and bars
And then our gloom implores Thy Spark
That burns the clouds, unveiling stars.

—Dilip Kumar Roy.

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

Sri Dilip Kumar Roy

(Shri Aurobindo Ashram)

It has been said that only a Christ could understand a Christ. And it is true. So I have felt I am essentially an *anadhikari*—that is to say, I have not a shadow of right to write about the message or philosophy of a Sage of the type of Maharshi Ramana. For an ego-bound soul can hardly be expected to write anything worth while about an ego-emancipated soul, such as the great Maharshi is. So I hesitated when I was asked to write something on a figure which shines to-day as one of the few light-houses in this global darkness which is the shadow of our primary ignorance of just the things that matter, or, shall I say, the one thing that matters: the last clue to Immortality? Put it whatever way we will, Sri Ramana Maharshi stands out as one of the great Guides to the Harbour for which we all hanker—from prince to pauper—tossed incessantly on the bursting crests of our new-foaming ego. Go where we will, we find men are puppets ultimately of desires in some form or other, gross or subtle. We hear doctrines preached by doctrinaires of life and operations recommended by surgeons of the soul to say nothing of panaceas advocated by politicians and scientists, artists and philosophers. But in vain. The soul thirsts to be rid of the curse of suffering, the badge of all sentient life. To put in the language of the Upanishad, to lay hold of the final remedy for the ills of life we appeal in vain to the *mantravit* instead of the *Atmavit.*[1] *Mantravit*, in modern English would correspond, roundly, to those who possess scientific knowledge. But only the *Atmavit*, the Sage, can take us beyond the frontiers of darkness, he being by definition the Treasurer of the House of Light, the Light of Self in full swing, stripped finally from the veils of the individual ego. So Narada who went to Sanatkumara approached him as a *mantravit* must approach an *Atmavit*. To his question about the riddle of the universe Sanatkumara's answer comes to this, that, in

[1] Vide Chhandogya (7.1.3), where Narada says to Sanatkumara: "Soham Bhagavo mantravidevsmi natmavit" which means "All my erudition notwithstanding I am only a man of science and not a sage."

the last analysis, the motive of all terrestrial action is to attain happiness; so the searchlight of enquiry must be focussed on the secret of happiness: "सुखं त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्यम् ।"[1] Whereupon Narada wanted to be enlightened again. It was only then that the great *Atmavit* told the *mantravit* that nothing short of the Infinite will give the key to Happiness: (यो वै भूमा तत्सुखं नाल्पे सुखमस्ति) "—only That which is in its nature inexhaustible, has the power to deliver the goods, nothing cribbed and cabined, can be a boon-giver of the supreme Happiness our soul hungers for,—the deathless Bliss, the cloudless Light."

Narada was convinced, because the one who talked to him about *Bhuma*, the Infinite, did know what he was talking about. But when we, the modern Naradas, want to be so convinced we seldom find an *Acharya* who is an indweller of the Mansion of the Infinite. That is why we remain for ever unhappy disciples of the *mantravits*, the men of science or, in the last resort, spoon-fed children of philosophers and poets, because these satisfy us perhaps a wee bit more. Nevertheless, a time must come when we have all to sigh in chorus with the great *alankaric* Ananda Bardhanacharya who, after having dealt fully with all the thrills that art and philosophy can supply sang dolefully:

या व्यापारवती रसान् रसयितुं दृष्टिः कविनां नवा
दृष्टिर्या परिनिष्ठितार्थविषयोन्मेषा च वैपश्चिती ।
ते द्वे अप्यवलंब्य विश्वमखिलं निर्वर्णयन्तो वयं
श्रान्ता नैव तु लब्धमब्धिशयन त्वद्भक्तितुल्यं सुखम् ॥

Which may be translated somewhat as follows:

We scanned life with the poet's scrutiny
And thrilled in Beauty's little flickerings,
Then searched with rushlights of philosophy
And roared: "Now stands revealed the core of things,"
Till O thou Vast, couched in the Primal Ocean
Our hearts surmised in deep world-weariness:
We missed Thy highest boon—the heart's devotion
To Thee, a bliss of everlasting Grace.

In recent times how often have we not overheard this muffled cry in truth-seekers who approach the lesser fry lusty with their

[1] It means: only the lore of Happiness deserves to be studied.

gospel of sonorous 'isms till in the end we find ourselves groping in the same labyrinth of semi-darkness.

But fortunately for us, the ancient tradition of Sagehood is still continued in our land of hoary wisdom, be it by ever so small a number. And when one meets one of these one discovers that even old words acquire a new ring, when for example one hears a Ramana Maharshi exclaim before Arunachala Shiva:

Thou mad'st me mad to cure me finally
Of madness for this world of fantasy.[1]

The words are moving because of the love the great Sage bore for Shiva, the Lord of his heart, the Lord to whom his surrender was so total, so unconditional. What can be more moving than a love which was free and yet so compelling that it made him sing:

As a spider thou wouldst watch me, Lord,
To trap me in thy web of Grace
Till now when I'm enmeshed thou com'st
And feed'st on me, O Blessedness![2]

Not for nothing does Ananda Bardhan sigh that we who have not yet known what is this heart's devotion to the Lord of the heart may never win even a glimpse of it through art and philosophy and science and what not.

But how few indeed are the *Atmavit* Masters who can testify to a truth so convincing and yet unconvincing because it sounds so incredible —almost too good to be true. For have we not wandered far from the "Heaven which *was* our home" trailing not "clouds of glory" but rather exhalations of a sea of blood which we have taken such enormous pains to replenish with our greed and science of ignorance and egoism!

I say this with some vehemence because just after the War, in 1945, I saw the Maharshi for the first time face to face. It was a memorable evening for me. I may as well write about my impressions of his personality since I am incompetent to write about his unsurpassed greatness. My apology at the start was not inspired by that hateful humbug, conventional modesty. It is a sincere confession of a recent realisation of mine that the likes of us can at best write hymns on such

1 FIVE HYMNS TO SRI-ARUNACHALA, by Sri Ramana Maharshi, P. 19.
2 Ibid, p. 23.

God-lovers but never attempt seriously to appraise their consciousness with ours, even when these God-lovers assure us that all men are essentially sustained by the same Divinity. One who has only peered at the stars through lenses however marvellous had better confess at the start that the astronomer can divine but an infinitesimal part of the truth about the stars. And men like the Maharshi are, if anything, even remoter from us than the sidereal zones, for they haunt worlds beyond all time and space where shine "no suns nor moons nor stars," as hymned by the Vedic sages.

I was a guest of the Asram and my comforts were attended to by so many kind friends, among whom I must mention my dear friend Dr. Mahamad Hafiz Syed. It is no mean tribute to the magnetism of the Maharshi that a man of the type of Dr. M. H. Syed should have settled in Tiruvannamalai after his retirement from academic life. But let me cut short these details about the charming personalities I met there (like Mrs. Taleyarkhan) in order to be able to devote more space to my impressions of the Maharshi himself.

I entered the hall with a strange feeling of diffidence. Had I not heard from ever so many that though the Maharshi was great (not one who met him even once ever denied him this tribute), he was a *Jnani* (man of Knowledge) of the orthodox type as against a *Bhakta* (a Devotee)? But when I met him for the first time on that memorable evening somehow it was borne home upon me even against appearances that the rumour was unwarranted. For the Maharshi's face was so kind, I may even add, soft with a shade of pensiveness. Here may be it's our eyes that often impart to a face what we see in ourselves, but my point in recording this first impression of mine is that I saw something I had not bargained for. That is, I did not see a man inaccessible to creatures of sorrow, and yet I felt with Paul Brunton that "he did not belong to us, the human race, so much as he belonged to nature, to the solitary peak that rose abruptly behind the hermitage, to the rough tract of jungle which sketched away into distant forests, and to the impenetrable sky which filled all space."[1] But then—and here again steps in the incorrigible Lady Parodox—he managed somehow to communicate something through his starpensive luminous gaze wherewith he greeted me from time to time, almost fortuitously as it were! I wondered if it was this

[1] THE MAHARSHI AND HIS MESSAGE, P. 35.

language which put me at once at my ease. For born and bred in the atmosphere of expression, I have still a soft corner left in my heart for the much-maligned art of expression as against the much-extolled science of silence. I have never yet been fully persuaded that silence was so flawless as it is claimed by all and sundry. I do not deny the value of silence. But—at least so it seems to me still—if silence was as unalloyedly golden why did the supreme create this world of name and form so vocal and radiant with loveliness? Furthermore, silence if it be all that its advocates claim it is must communicate its message through a code of its own. And that is what I verified once again at the feet of the Maharshi. To exploit here what the Maharshi said once that "the Egoless State is not one of indolence, but of intense activity,"[1] I thought (I don't dare to use the word 'felt') that *his* silence in any case was not of an amorphous brand, which brings me to a talk I had with him the next morning. I may as well put it on paper here.

A Tamil friend of mine, Sri Nilakantha, once told me—in Ernakulam, last year—when we were discussing the Maharshi that he had once spent a night with the Maharshi in the same room. In the morning, he told me, the Maharshi started washing and peeling vegetables, etc. to get them ready for cooking. He seemed so simply happy about it that Nilakantha was a little surprised.

"But what about the world, Maharshi?" he blurted out.

"World!" Maharshi gave him a compassionate look tinctured with irony.

"About the seething humanity, sweating and suffering," Nilakantha explained. "What is the solution of so much suffering in the world?"

"Have you found out the solution about your own self's suffering that you are so keen to solve the world's?"

Nilakantha could not pursue his query any further. But his mind gave him no rest and he resumed: "But you are so silent!"

"Yes?"

"I mean .... I have heard that you often say silence is more powerful than speech. Do you really mean it?"

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[1] MAHA YOGA, P. 234.

"I do," the Maharshi nodded. "And I say that Vivekananda was perfectly right when he said that if you thought a good thought in a cave it would have repercussions in the whole world."

I related this to the Maharshi and asked him if the report was true. He smiled and nodded. Then he said in Tamil which one of his disciples translated into English for me: "Silence is eternal speech and it is speech that interrupts that language." And he asked a disciple to fetch his little booklet entitled "Maharshi's Gospel" and it was read out to me:

"That State which transcends speech and thought is *Mouna* (Silence); it is meditation without mental activity, Subjugation of the mind is meditation: deep meditation is eternal speech. Silence is ever speaking; it is perennial flow of language. It is interrupted by speaking; for words obstruct this mute language."

The questioner had then asked why he did not go about and preach his truth to the world at large, whereupon he had answered:

"How do you know I am not doing it? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people around? Preaching is simple communication of Knowledge; it can really be done in silence only. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another who sits near a holy Presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is the better, to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending out inner force?"

Maharshi's alertness to the mischief of language is highly enjoyable. Apropos of something I had asked him, my Tamil interpreter was translating for my benefit; he said:

"Maharshi wants to tell you that when one becomes one with God—"

Maharshi at once pounced upon him and was voluble enough in all conscience. After the reprimand the dragoman turned to me with a wry face.

"Maharshi halted me," he said, "to tell you that it is through just such monkey-tricks of our human language that the kernel meaning of one's say is often entirely crushed out. For, he told me, that the phrase about becoming one with God makes no meaning at all since we *are*, willy-nilly, one with God *always*, and can't be anything but God even if we try desperately to. So, how can one *become* what one always is?'

We roared heartily.

Maharshi has a fund of humour, another feature which endeared him so much to me. I feel tempted to give a few instances.

My friend A.... (a man of rare sincerity)—told me in his lovely cottage at Tiruvannamalai that once he had complained that he had not gained anything from the Maharshi, whereupon he had quickly replied: "But that is because you never lost anything."

Of course for the likes of us such sayings must sound a little cryptic, to say the least. For when all is said and done the fact remains that we do feel we are long-suffering mortals and very often anything but gainers in life's dreadful chafferings. But that is precisely why we are not entitled to air our views on his philosophy moulded in the burning crucible of his realisations. Not for nothing does he so tirelessly harp on the comedy of discussing eruditely about tweedledums and tweedledees of the lore of the spirit without having any basic experience of what one is so verbose about. He is reported as having said that there is no practical difference between an atheist and a deist except in the field of *sadhana*; in other words, the only thing that does make a difference crystallizes out through a process of self-purification. His quoted words are: "What is the use of asserting or denying that there is a real Self (other than the bodies), that it is with form, that it is one, and so on? All these disputes are in the realm of ignorance."[1]

Such irony makes a curiously strong impression when aimed at the futility of wordy verbiage, in the realm of the spirit. I had the good fortune of meeting a man of real wisdom—Sri. Gopal Chatterji—who was heckled by a friend of mine about the *nirguna* and *saguna* Brahma and such blood-curdling wizardries. Sri. Gopal smiled and said: "My friend, why waste time in such learned discussions when you are being swept away by eddies of Fate and passion? When a man is about to be drowned he should first enquire whether there is a boat near at hand or a safe piece of solid ground and how to get to it. But you are almost breathtaking in your learned disputes. You might just as well ask the whirling rapids to discuss with you why it preferred a liquid state to the solid."

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1 MAHA YOGA, P. 260

And withal, place side by side the Maharshi's celebrated irony: "This Light is the Self, the Infinite Consciousness, of which no one is unaware. No one is an *ajnani* (ignorant), non-knower of the Self. Not knowing this men wish to become *Jnanis* (Wise men)." (*Maha Yoga p. XIV*)

One is almost reminded of Anatole France who said: "Plus je sonje à la vie humaine, plus je crois qu'il faut lui donner pour te'moins et pour ju'ges l'Ironie et la Pitie'."[1]

What is droll is sentimentality and lachrymose sighing about human suffering. Not for nothing does the Maharshi tease humanitarians with an irony all his own. Paul Brunton has given an instance of this in his book on the Maharshi. He once asked the Sage:

"Will the Maharshi express an opinion about the future of the world?"

"Why do you trouble yourself about the future?" demanded the Sage. "You do not even properly know about the present! Take care of the present; the future will then take care of itself."

Paul Brunton however did not wince. He pursued: "Will the world soon enter a new era of friendliness and mutual help, or will it go down into chaos and War?" Whereupon the Maharshi rose to the occasion.

"There is One who governs the world, and it is *His* lookout to look after the world. He who has given life to the world knows how to look after it also. *He* bears the burden of the world, not *you*."

How simple and yet how elusive! Elusive, because of the human ego of course which swears by action without understanding much about its nature and disconcerting repercussions. And it is just because of a kind of obstinacy in our egoistic intellect, a kink in the mind, which refuses to see right, or shall we say, wants to see askew, that we need such ironic comment from great sages like Sri Ramana Maharshi. For it is only vision such as theirs that can serve as compass in our life of storms with their constant retinue—the clouds. But to proceed.

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[1] The more I meditate on human life the more I incline to believe that its best witness and judge are Irony and Pity. (LE JARDIN D'EPICURE).

Apropos of humour something rather delectable cropped up on that very evening. My friend Dr. Hafiz put a question:—

"Talking of prayer, Maharshi," he remarked at venture, "I can understand all that is often put forward as the reason of God's not answering the wrong kind of prayers. But why should He turn a deaf ear to the right sort is what beats me. Look at me. *How* often have I not prayed that He make me a stronger pedestrian, a purer servant —in short, a nobler specimen of humanity? But why aren't my prayers heard?"

The Maharshi's eyes twinkled with a childlike merriment as he said:

"Because if they had been you wouldn't have prayed to Him any more."

We roared. It was exquisite!

Dr. Syed told me of another. Once a snake went over the body of Maharshi. He was unperturbed. When asked whether he felt any reaction of fear, the Maharshi stared, amazed.

"Fear! What on earth for?"

They were astonished at his astonishment, when Dr. Syed asked him about how he had felt exactly.

"Cool," returned Maharshi with a smile of insouciance.

To cite just one last instance of his quaint humour.

Mrs. Chandrasekhar whom I met at Ramanashram after a long time told me a great deal about him with her beautiful clarity. It was a sheer delight to hear her talk and to notice how much she had profited by the Maharshi's hallowed contact. Among other items of information she told me this:

"Somebody had suggested," she said, "that as it was getting rather cold the Maharshi should put on a vest and a coat. Maharshi smiled and said: 'Our poor soul is all but suffocated under five robust coats —the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya*. And you have the heart to inflict two more yet?'"

On another occasion, said Mrs. Chandrasekhar, somebody asked him why, if all were the one Shiva, did he accept their *pranam.*

"But why shouldn't I?" he retorted readily. And he added: "But don't you know, before they prostrate themselves in front of this body I prostrate myself before the Shiva in each of them?"

What a beautiful answer and how moving! Yet in how few would it sound so moving? What is there on earth more uplifting than to see the great acting like the common run, claiming no higher cushion of dignity? And how few even among the eminent can in practice accept to be treated like the commonalty?

This thought occurred to me again and again when I sat near to the Maharshi and watched him eat his food with all, like one of the crowd. To me it was indeed fascinating to watch him eat in an abstracted and withal alert mood—slowly, cleanly and with such a radiant tranquillity. He never even tolerated that his fellow diners should wait till he finished. Once as I waited thus, he made me a motion with his hand asking me to leave him and wash my hands. The simplicity of such an attitude deeply affected me. And then with what meticulous care he ate! Not a grain of rice was spilt outside his banana-leaf. Nor did he ever take a morsel that he had no use for; lastly, after his food had vanished he scraped his leaf with his fingers till the leaf shone brightly almost like a mirror. Then he rose and slowly moved out to wash his hands as did the others but tolerating no special recoiling movement of reverence, not even the ordinary courtesy of "after you, sir." His self-obliviousness was enchanting, for me, anyway. To think that a man of his Olympian altitude should hobnob with dwarfs like us and that so naturally, as if it could hardly be otherwise so far as he was concerned. It was not a movement that he had consciously practised to perfection, far less what we mortals dubbed humility. There was nothing forced about any of his movements: no straining after-effect, dignified, or sublime. Greatness sat easily on him as beauty on a sunset cloud, albeit with a devastating effect, as often as not. For all our ideas as to how the great should act seem to be dismissed by him with a smile of simple disavowal. I remember how one day Mrs. Chandrasekhar and Hafiz and I chatted on just on his left and gossiped and laughed as though we were by ourselves with no giant among us to reckon with. Mrs. Chandrasekhar was even more at her ease than I—for, do what I would, I could not

quite rise to the occasion as she did. I threw furtive glances at the Parnassian sitting next to us chewing the simple food, the food that was served us—nothing more, nothing less—and whenever I appraised him I felt a glow of gratitude to him that made me deaf to whatever we happened to be discussing and laughing about. For we were actually laughing and cracking jokes with each other with him sitting next to us and hearing everything we were saying. This is by no means pure fabrication on my part, for it did happen as simply as it happened that the servants came and ladled out curd or curry on our leaves and then did the same to him. And when he wanted anything he called for it and waited as patiently as we did. There was no show of hurry in the air when he called for anything, for—so Mrs. Chandrasekhar told me and I verified with my own witnessing—he never smiled on any extra attention, not once. One of his disciples told me that as he was ageing somebody had suggested a special diet for him. Whereupon the Maharshi only said, with a smile, that he could consent to accept the special food only on condition that it would be served to all in which case it would cease to be special. What a unique way he had of disclaiming any special attention and what a lovely way at that!

And there he sits day after day from dawn to dusk with only about an hour's rest in the afternoon. The disciples come and ask him questions; he answers if he feels like answering; if not, he makes as if he has not heard; a vessel of embers by his side emits odours of a delicate incense and what not; sometimes he stretches his legs, at other times he sits cross-legged; he looks on often with unseeing eyes though sometimes he fixes his shining orbs just for a few seconds on his interlocutor or a visitor who prostrates himself before him; he gets up at stated times and goes out into the hill and then comes back again and resumes his sitting or reclining posture on his simple divan all the time with nothing but the literal *koupin* on, the minimum piece of cloth that the ascetics use in our land of proverbial nudeness; he reads a few letters brought to him by a disciple who I was told talks with none save his master; looks at the paper cursorily for a few minutes; sometimes takes up a fan to attend to the embers emitting spirals of aromatic fumes; sometimes he holds his hand, tilted in mid-air in a posture of blessing—this striking posture of his hand, the left hand I think, has been photographed already; occasionally he looks at some monkeys who accost him peering through the window-bars on his right and he smiles on them and asks an attendant to give them

some bananas, or sometimes it is peacocks who partake of his hospitality; then come the visitors or the menials or his regular disciples though I heard he owns none as such, still disciples they are even though he seldom gives them a glance unless spoken to first; and last though not least, a baby or two is brought by their parents when the Maharshi's eyes twinkle merrily almost claiming kinship with these, sometimes he makes faces at them or comic grimaces and they answer too with similar gestures.

This is what I saw with my own eyes day after day during my five days' stay at the Asram of this unique sage the like of whom I am sure is not to be met within this vast world. I do not say this to make comparisons, (for who am I to compare—have I not confessed at the start to my utter incapacity even to pay any real homage to the greatness of a *Jivanmukta*, because I cannot persuade myself that an ego-haunted creature can ever really know what it is to cross for good the boundary of the ego, so how can the likes of us with our awful myopia of ignorance and preconceptions presume to appraise a seer who moves slowly in his orbit like a throbless star?) No, I repeat, I do not take up my pen to portray his greatness but only to record the impression this great Non-descript made on me. I have never in my life of varied exoeriences and wide travelling met a man so utterly indescribable and yet so profoundly moving. I cannot even express why he moved me to my depths with eyes where no soft light of emotion presided, and yet it bathed me when I met his gaze with a peace that I find as unaccountable as it was delectable, to say the least. Unaccountable, because I had gone to see him well on my guard. For though I had heard a lot about his fascination, I have never been by nature partial to extreme gravity of demeanour. Krishna has been my one *Ishta*, no Shiva with his matchless grandeur of Kailasa for me. (I have never believed in blasphemy, thanks to Krishna who can take a joke.) So I had some hesitation to visit such a cold hard grandeur.

But what I saw was so different. I saw indeed a man who in his exterior was anything but distinguished, far less handsome or captivating, and yet..... how shall I put it..... he was so compelling, and withal, so disarming! I shall never forget how deeply stirred I was when I saw his austere yet kind face in the light of electric lamps. The disciples sat on the floor in complete silence. I made him my *pranam* and he gave me a kind but a keen glance, but for a moment

only, for he motioned me to take my seat over there. And I obeyed, strangely touched. And then the peace I felt! I was reminded of Paul Brunton's startled though unvoiced query: "Does this man, the Maharshi, emanate the perfume of spiritual peace as the flower emanates fragrance from its petals?"

It was a beautiful question and a cogent one at that. For how few can disengage from their silent self this aroma that baffles description? And it was so beautiful that I realised for the first time what is really meant by the word "sacred". For wouldn't a feeling connoted by such a word seem somewhat banal, wouldn't it even savour of journalism when one went all out to describe it with carefully culled epithets that gave style? I have often wondered if the deepest emotion bordering on the holy could ever lend itself to be translated through any other medium than that of inspired verse and hymn. I had this feeling again that evening and more powerfully, overwhelmingly. And yet I have consented to write in prose about him. Not for nothing the stars twinkle in irony when men make pious resolutions. But it is time to draw to a close. And I can do that best by worshipping the Ganges with her own water, that is, by trying to reproduce a few talks I had with the Maharshi of which I took good care to keep record, as I have been in the habit of doing since my adolescence. For though the Maharshi quoted a famous couplet from Sankara's hymn to Dakshinamurti Shiva about the power of the silent commentary of the youthful *Guru* to resolve all doubts of his ancient disciples[1], I found his vocal commentary too delightful to be thus dismissed out of hand,

I mentioned that in the book ***Maha Yoga*** the writer had quoted it as the Maharshi's considered opinion that no sage ever contradicted another sage and that revelation told us that all sages were one.

Maharshi kept silent for a little then, gave me his kind glance and began abruptly just when I had begun to doubt whether he would deem my question worth answering. The gist of what he said was that for different wayfarers different paths seem differently constructed, but when they reach the Goal the perspective changes, and in this ultimate perspective those who have arrived see that the ones who quarrel about the relative merits of the roads are those who have not arrived yet and

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[1] चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धाश्शिष्याः गुरुर्युवा ।
गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु च्छिन्नसंशयाः ॥

as such cannot understand this simple fact that it is the Goal that matters from the eternal point of view, not the roads that variously lead you to it. But when these very debaters arrive, then they see, each in his turn, the unwisdom of all such quarrels, because all are one and therefore how can one quarrel with oneself?

"And this oneness is so concretely real," he said, "if Y wants something from X let us say, then X can hardly decline because in giving to Y, X only gives himself."

Although such ideas are rather far from our consciousness yet I quote this because I find the thought too beautiful to be by-passed Whether a sufficient number of humans will ever realise this सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म (all is the same God) as vividly as the sages do so as to feel no longer any difference between mine and thine is another matter. However, to proceed, again:

"But, Maharshi," I asked after a hesitant pause, "why is it that the *Bhakta* (Devotee) so often turns away from a *Jnani* (man of Knowledge)? For this happens even after they have arrived, doesn't it?"

Maharshi gave me a beautiful smile. I was reminded of a letter of our great novelist Saratchandra writing about an English philosopher.

"The other day," he wrote to me, "I read Russell's *Outline of Philosophy* . . . . He has no end of compassion for the laymen. Poor things. Let me try to enlighten you somewhat ... this kind of compassion permeates every line of his different exegeses. I often marvel at the vast gulf that separates a truly wise man from a charlatan."

It is so true. For even when I could not fully take in what the Maharshi so indulgently explained to the poor thing that Dilip was, he made me feel how deeply compassionate he was even when he must have been smiling all the time at my foolishness.

"But this is all wrong," he said. "The premise I mean. For as soon as the *Bhakta* arrives he finds he is at one with the *Jnani*. For the *Bhakta* then becomes *Bhakti-swarupa* (the essence of *Bhakti*) even as the *Jnani* becomes *Jnana-swarupa* (the essence of *Jnana*) and the two are one, identical." And he added that this quarrel between *Jnana* and *Bhakti* is championed not by the authentic hierophants of each category but by the spurious specimens, the *pseudo-bhaktas* and *pseudo-jnanis*."

I sang to him more than once. It was a delightful experience; and, naturally, I took it is a great favour. For, though I had for a long time been wanting to have the privilege of offering my humble songs to one so holy, I had felt not a little diffident about evoking any response from a supreme *Jnani* like him. But I was ravished by his kind glance every time I sang a song and by his bewitching smile. I have seldom seen such a simple smile in one who is so high-born. Bhavabhuti's famous simile often occurred to me as I thrilled to his tender smile so lavish of compassion:

वज्रादपि कठोराणि मृदूनि कुसुमादपि ।

He's harder than a thunder of doom
Yet softer than a budding bloom.

We had some discussion about *Guruvad* also but I will not take the trouble of reproducing it. Suffice it that he disabused my mind of a long-standing notion that he was against *Guruvad.* What he said about it pithily in the end is however so significant that I cannot help but give it below:—

"To put it in a nut-shell," he wound up, "to some He reveals Himself as an outer *Guru,* to others as an inner one. But the function of either is the same: the outer Guru pushes you inside while the inner Guru draws you in—so that in the end it comes to the same thing. So why then all this wrangling about *Guruvad*?"

What a moving catholicity added to incredible simplicity! For the Maharshi has not the slightest use for pretentiousness and self-importance, that terrible Macbeth who murders the simple sleep of spiritual peace. He is for no trappings either of speech or of learning. He is a symbol of a child in all its primal unashamed delight of nakedness, the wisdom of nakedness of which his loin-cloth is curiously the outer symbol; the inner was voiced by his prayer to Shiva nearly fifty years ago when he first came (1896) to the Hill of Arunachala to leave it nevermore:

O strip me nude, these earth's robes now remove
To drape me with the vestures of thy Love.[1]

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[1] The two hymns given at the beginning and this one at the end I have rendered in verse because hymns sound more moving in verse than in prose. The citations are to be found on pages 20, 26 & 12 of the booklet entitled "FIVE HYMNS TO SRI ARUNACHALA," being a prose translation of the Maharshi's original Tamil Verses.

TO SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

A face that's still like silent cloudless blue,
And eyes that even as stars drip holiness
Won from a Source beyond our ken — a new,
Messenger Thou, in this age, of a grace

Men ache for and, withal, are terrified
When it shines near — wan puppets of fool senses,
They would disown the soul's faith — even deride
The Peace they crave yet fear — for Life's false dances

And siren rhythms beguile the multitude!
And there they woo Time's whirls and wheels—for what?
At best a reeling moment — an interlude
Of half-lit laughter dogged by tears — of Fate!

O Son of Dawn! who only knowest the Sun,
And through His eye of Light see'st all that lies
Revealed — a flawless Plenitude which none
But Sun's own children ever might surmise!

For only the chosen few so far have won
The Truth that shines beyond world's wounds and cries;
Who see Thee, throned in the high dominion
Of Self's invulnerable Verities,

Enjoy a glimpse of Bliss of the Beyond,
Thou singest: "Nay, 'tis here" — yet without Thy
Lone sight-born pledge — how few would understand!
Homage to Thee, O Bard of Clarity!

—*Dilip Kumar Roy.*

प्रातस्स्मराम्यरुणशैलनितंबदीव्य-
त्पुण्याश्रमे रुचिरमञ्चवरे शयानम् ।
प्रावारकाऽऽवृततनुं मुकुलीकृताक्ष-
मन्तर्मुखं रमणमात्मसमाधिलीनम् ॥

I remember at dawn the Blessed Ramana, Who is reposing on a beautiful cot in the holy hermitage flourishing on the slope of the Arunachala, Whose body is wrapt in a shawl, Whose eyes are slightly closed, Whose vision is turned inside and Who is absorbed in His own Ecstatic State.

THE TEAR-DROPS IN MY EYES, I OFFER

There's little left here, Bhagavan,
To offer Thee—too poor am I:
There's nothing left at all to give,
For all achievements vanish at Thy Feet
And all things dwindle to mere nothingness,
– So trivial are all forms of life –,
There's one thing only that with faltering heart
I dare to offer Thee—,
If Thou wilt graciously accept:
It is the tear-drops in my eyes
Which ever manifest themselves
In silent contemplation of Thy Grace.
They spring from Thee:
They are the Elixir of Bliss—
Let them return to Thee,
Their Source, the Ocean of Pure Love,
As a symbol of my heart.

—Sadhu Ekarasa.
(Dr. G. H. Mees, M.A., LL.D.)

THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

By

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice N. Chandrasekhara Aiyar

The life of the Maharshi is too well-known to need recapitulation. From boyhood, his concern was not with this world around him, but with the Beyond; and he was an impetuous seeker after Truth, sometimes in company, but mostly in solitude. *Sadhanas* as such were not gone through by him, and yet he is now a realised soul. Of education, as it is ordinarily understood, he has had very little; but this makes no difference whatever in the onward march of the pilgrim to the temple of Eternal Bliss. Apparently, he began in this *janma* or life from where he ended in the previous. The thread is one and continuous to those with inner vision, though to us ordinary mortals the beginning as well as the end is hidden, and we see only a tiny patch or streak, in between.

I paid my homage to the Sage only twice, and was struck by his large and luminous eyes, through which the very soul peeps into us, as it were. When he fixes his keen gaze on us, it looks as though he is seeing the inner clockwork of a mechanism in a transparent case; and you get the feeling that a mild current of grace is flowing into you from him. He speaks very little, but when he does speak, his words roll out slowly, with deliberate and telling effect. His silence is however more eloquent than his speech. The tremor of his head is suggestive of the famous Upanishadic teaching "नेति नेति" (Not this, not this.)

Sages may perhaps be classified into two kinds;—those who, with dynamic energy, carry their gospel to every home, and those who live in secluded retirement in caves, mountain fastnesses, or *ashramas*, dreaming holy thoughts for the betterment and the blessing of the world, and giving their message or *upadesha* to those who seek them. Sri Ramanaswami belongs to the latter group. He is a veritable storehouse of spiritual energy and wisdom. He radiates *shanti* or Peace; and those who come into contact with him feel a subtle, pervasive, and godly influence gently spreading over them.

Saints and mystics often employ the medium of parables in their expositions of the truth; and their meaning is somewhat difficult to comprehend. The same words may be understood in different senses and as having varied applications. When, for instance, one of the Tamil *siddhas* said "காணாமல் கோணாமல் கண்டு கொடு", did he refer to the अर्घ्य (*Arghya*)—oblation of water to be offered to the Sun by every devout Hindu—and did he prescribe that it should be given early in the morning before seeing the sun, right at the midday, when the sun has not bent beyond the meridian, and in the evening, before he sinks into the western horizon; or did he indicate how gifts should be given, namely, without others noticing what you are giving, without any wryness in your face, and after satisfying yourself about the fitness of the recipient? Such sayings of varied import, and interpreted according to the aptitude of the hearers, abound in every religious literature. The Maharshi speaks in this strain. His sayings are pithy and of deep import. To illustrate: "Solitude is in the mind of man." "All that is required to realise the Self is to be still." "If all is God, are you not included in that all; being God yourself, is it a wonder that all is God?"

He does not belong to the orthodox order of Hindu *sannyasins*. But what does it really matter? A स्थितप्रज्ञ is not bound by any rules of outward form or ceremonial. For the *Jeevanmukta*, there is nothing like "you" and "me", and no caste, creed, or race. Commands and injunctions have no validity against them. Such men belong to a superlative category of their own, whom the poet-philosopher has described in a single magnificent line:

निस्त्रैगुण्ये पथि विचरतः को विधिः को निषेधः ॥

To those who tread the path transcending the *gunas*,[1] where is *vidhi*,[2] where is *nishedha*?[3]

Sri Ramana reminds us of the two famous verses in the second chapter of the Gita:—

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

[1] *Gunas* are the three qualities, *sattva, rajas & tamas*—(*purity, activity & inertia.*)
[2] *Vidhi* is a command or injunction one must obey.
[3] *Nishedha* is a prohibition against doing something.

"Where it is night for all living beings, there the austere man is awake; where the world is awake, there it is night for the saint who sees:" (ii, 69.)

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥

"He whom all desires enter as the waters enter the full and firm established sea, wins peace: not so, the desirer of desires." (ii, 70.)

Perfect detachment, indifference to pain and pleasure, absolute renunciation, true mental equipoise or equilibrium, and शान्ति born out of self-realisation—such are the hallmarks of the Indian *rishis* of old; and Sri Ramana belongs to this great hierarchy of Seers.

There are two beacon lights in Tiruvannamalai. One is that which flames up yearly on the *karthigai* day from the top of the holy Arunachala Hill, as a devout offering by the *bhaktas* to God and as a reminder of His dazzling brilliance, pervading and sustaining the whole Universe. The other beacon is the Maharshi himself, who by his transcendent spirituality and divine grace daily illumines the world and guides the footsteps of erring humanity from darkness to light. Blessed is the land that has produced him; and blessed are they who are privileged to be his contemporaries. To be in his presence is by itself a stirring experience in the elevation of the soul; to receive a few words of counsel from him is a rare blessing; to be the recipient of his benediction is to be assured of a spiritual fortune.

Sri Sankara says:

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तः वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्णाः स्वयं भीमभवार्णवं जनानहेतुनान्यानपि तारयन्तः ॥

"The saints, the great Ones, live in peace. Like the spring season, they confer good on the whole world. Themselves having crossed the mighty ocean of *samsara*, they enable others also to cross the same, with no apparent motive in doing so."

Such men exist even today, and if we do not see them, it is our fault; our search is indifferent and the faith dim. In the new reordering of the world, we want more of seers, sages and saints than of statesmen or generals. For, the one class constructs; the other destroys.

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

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The 30th of December 1879 was a day of illumination for the Tamil land and the whole world. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was born at Tiruchuzi, on this auspicious Aradra *Darshanam* day with the Sun in Sagittarius radiating courage and the Moon riding in Full in the constellation of Aradra, shedding introspection, bridging Heaven and Earth once again through yet another rare human birth. *Avatars* step us up the spiral of evolution by one global movement, while *Acharyas* stabilise the new order of society and code of values ushered in by the Avatars. Sri Bhagavan has his rank among the illustrious group of the first order.

All life from amoeba to man resolves itself into an ever-ascending spiral of consciousness. Man sits restless on the top of this spiral with mind as the instrument that reflects the grade and rank of his consciousness, and gives him the sovereignty over life. Mind is an instrument remarkably fit for objective adventures and for apprehending the diversity in creation. Yet at the end of all this roaming adventure over the wild seas of the objective world, it returns tired with a strange longing for a haven of rest to realise its own Self, the unity that underlies all this diversity. If rightly set on the path of Self-enquiry and *Swanubhava*, the very activities of the mind will eventually lead to a state of mind-lessness, the complete destruction of the *pravrittis* of the mind and all its qualities of restlessness, predatoriness, acquisitiveness, analysis, division and duality.

Sri Bhagavan's sovereign *sadhana* for Self-realisation is " Self-enquiry ". It requires no *asana* or *yogic* ritual, but a strenuous and sincere turning of the mind inward. It is the shortest though the most rugged short-cut to attain this sublimation of the mind with courage and self-surrender. Curl up the monkey-tail of the mind into its own infinite coils and still all its activities which leap from branch to branch creating the *Maya*

of the world, the smoke-screen that hides the Truth, the nature of Reality, mercilessly destroy the mind, as you would destroy a piece of wood to liberate the flame imprisoned therein. It is a process that makes the mind first fatigued, annoyed and churlish. It may set free at first only dense smoke and no spark, like green fuel on fire. But if you persist long enough, you will be surely rewarded with the flame of illumination, smokeless and lambent.

This ancient Upanishadic Truth, the priceless inheritance of the glorious river-valley civilisation of India, Sri Bhagavan enshrines and reveals by example and silence and the magnetic gleams of a personality which shines like lightning, revealing the dark rain-bearing clouds ready to descend and fertilise.

Ego is the shadow that dwarfs life. The "I" is the fingerpost of misery. It must be uprooted and ploughed into the ground like weeds and tares. The "I" shall cast no shadow on the affairs of men. The "ego" that makes rancid all human relationship by its exclusiveness, acquisitiveness and predatoriness must be sterilised till our consciousness is free from all trace of this unhealthiness that emaciates and destroys life. Can there be a truer or nobler philosophy of life either for speculation or for action? Sri Bhagavan preaches this by a resplendent and creative Silence.

Free the mind of *kama,* then you free also action of all desires. This makes for an ego-less consciousness by a process of psychological purification whose refining pulse-beats you can follow, if you are on the path of Self-enquiry. This cleanses the spring source of all action and releases action in its purest and most *sattvic* form, widening the range of consciousness till the sense of duality is destroyed. Life at this level becomes snow-fed at Himalayan heights. Action flows freed from the twists and eddies, illusions, defeats and frustrations of objectivity. There is then no inherent conflict between *shanti* and *shakti*, if your awareness is ego-less and utterly desireless. Then, Power is Tranquillity. Tranquillity is Power.

Truth or Reality is indescribable, and words obscure more and reveal less. Words take us nowhere in Self-realisation. Therefore, nothing like an immersion in Bhagavan's immediate presence. That is the best way to learn swimming. Text-books on swimming will not help us. *Darshan* and saturation in his presence, calm, loving and gently

guiding, alone can illumine the track amidst the dark and mysterious corridors of life. His presence kindles your *swanubhava* and sets you on the immortal path of Self-enquiry. His Silence ambushes your hundred doubts of the mind in his presence.

Sri Bhagavan is an ocean of tranquillity. There is a Peace in his presence that passeth all comprehension. He greets you and clasps you not by the monkey-hand of the mind, but the invisible divine feelers of his heart. His entire approach to you is not objective, is not through the predatory mind. It is an all-inclusive Grace. It is an embrace of his entire personality.

He touches you by a fourth-dimensional touch. Hence at the first impact you feel a sense of strangeness, neglect and indifference. But this loneliness is creative in that it leads you to the higher life, the first touch of the Master that detaches the mind from the fetters of its own dear ego-world.

How infinite is the Grace of Sri Bhagavan, but how little we profit by it! He rolls on sublimely like a deep river in flood, unmindful of the wastefulness and the ignorance of the human dwellers on the banks. There is an elemental sublimity about Sri Bhagavan like that of the winds and the waves, the sun and the stars. His life is to us an example and a proof that the path of Self-enquiry makes you one with the Universe.

The Divine is in you. Earnestly search for it, with the help of Sri Bhagavan's Grace and Presence.



SRI MAHARSHI
THE ALCHEMIST



What Maharshi knew at seventeen, we do not know at seventy.

Why?

Ah! We lack the fire; our hearts are cold and our heads are hard.

Alas! what shall we do?

Go to Maharshi? Yea; He'll lend us fire, warm our hearts— now cold — and turn the stones in us into Gold.

That is Maharshi, the Alchemist.

*   *   *   *

Him that Gods do praise
Men do not recognise:
—Nay, even crucify!
How long the world cared not for Him, the Maharshi!
How few now too are they that care for Him?
They that dare ignore the Self
Wouldn't they ignore all else?
But then, God knows and cares,
Himself in Gita *so declares.*

—Girdharlal,
(Shri Aurobindo Ashram)

SRI ARUNACHALA RAMANA

Unto the Blessed One of Arunachala,
The gracious Rishi, Bhagavan Sri Ramana,
Be gladly paid with deepest reverential bow
Such adoration as our hearts can compass now.

Amid the hills of ancient Tamil land
Towers in solitude the rosy height
Whereon the Karttik moon is yearly twinned
By a vast flaring Beacon that aspires
Across the shimmering darkness of the night.
It is the Hill of Arunachala,
Wherein Great Siva with His Saints abides;
The yearly fire leaps forth upon its Peak.

But now, amid the nestling shrines that kneel
Like children round a loving mother's feet,
Rays daily forth a brighter Beacon flame,—
The Silent Sage of Arunachala.

Quiet and steady as the Peak itself,
He dwells among us wanderers, who dream
The fatal follies of the mind, and shines
Majestical within our shadowed hearts.
We cannot cabin Him within the walls
Here built to frame Him. No; there spreads afar
His sacred influence and grace benign.
His Spirit is in all the world, and all
Repose in Him, the Inner Self of all,
The Secret Lord of Arunachala.

Crowds gather always to His flower-feet.
The fragrant blossom does not seek the bee;
Its essence floats upon the waiting air,
And fainting creatures hasten to the Source,
To lose themselves within the sweetness hid
Deep in its resting Heart, and there to swoon
Away in all-transcending endless bliss.

Silence ...., and in that silence slowly dawns
A star of Vision, and begins to throb
With hidden ecstasy of vibrant Life
That wakes its echo in each dreaming soul.
Then, as the lightning flashes in the Shrine
Its sudden radiance, so a fleeting glimpse
Of boundless wonder steals within the heart,
While rushing winds blow through the pillared court
That stands around the ever-lonely Shrine.
Eternal Chalice of the Steady Flame,
Whose seat is on this Arunachala,
He dances in the ashes of our minds,
Effulgent, Infinite, Omniscient.

O Siva-Yogi, Mighty God, to Thee,
Incarnate in this Silent One, whose gaze
Can shrivel at a glance dark Passion, and
The clouds of ignorance that swirl around
The ever-blissful and all-seeing Self,—
To Thee we offer flowers of our desire.
Inspire within our hearts the soaring Flame
That burns each Karttik on this Glory-hill
Of Arunachala. Reveal the One
The only Being Immanent, the Self
Within the dreaming self. Strike down our fears,

Our hopes, our shadows of the mind. Unveil
Thy beauty. Though we try with feeble words
To speak of Thee and of Thy potent grace,
Words shrink to silence at the mystery
Of Silence shrined beside this mighty Hill.

Now from that Beacon slowly wafts the scent
Of camphor burning,—as our hearts for Thee,—
Of forest garland archeds on Krishna's breast
While He is dancing His eternal Dance.

And in our eager souls drop quietly
The fragrant dews of the One Guru's grace,
Till at their magic touch all bonds decay,—
Sivatma reigning, Sea of moveless Peace,
Still as the rocks of Arunagiri.
What need is there of speech? The silent know
The ebb and flow of that unchanging Light;
And He who silently reposes here,
Stayed in the Heart of Arunachala,
Is Lord of Silence, and the Self of all.

—*Duncan Greenlees, M. A. (Oxon.)*



A VISION OF THE ABSOLUTE
Reflections after a Day at Sri Ramanasramam

By

Dr. C. Kunhan Raja

In response to the kind invitation from the devotees at Sri Ramanasramam, I visited the place early in the morning on the 10th of August this year, and spent a whole day there, leaving the Asramam only early the next morning. When I alighted from my conveyance a few yards within the gate, the first impression I had was about the serene calmness that prevailed in the whole place, which was rather an extensive one. There was no crowd; there was no noise, no hustle. It was not the silence of desolation; there was life, there was activity; I could see people move about, and there was also cheer in their looks.

I was first shown to the office of the Sarvadhikari, and soon was taken to a small bungalow that was assigned to me. The consideration shown to me, the hospitality that was extended, the freedom and the absence of conventions, all these put me at my ease; I must confess that though I am naturally very shy and unaccustomed to new environments, I felt quite at home. Everything was tidy and in scrupulous order; the place was kept ideally clean. This made my stay perfectly comfortable both physically and emotionally.

There is a sort of superstition prevalent in places with a religious and "spiritual" bias that there is no harmony between the world and its affairs on the one side and the Divine on the other. In such places there are also certain codes of belief that are demanded, though informally. Here, at Sri Ramanasramam, I must say, there are no such codes of belief demanded of the residents or of the visitors. This is another factor that made me feel at home in the place during my, rather too short, stay.

I was sitting in the office referred to above, when I was called out; and I saw Bhagavan Sri Ramana going up the steps in front of

the building next to the office and I was directed to follow. I thought I was going to the place to pay my respects to the Sage. But I found myself in the dining hall, where the early morning light refreshments were being served; very tasty materials served with incredible order and cleanliness gave a very agreeable surprise. The Maharshi sat at one side of the hall, and all others were sitting in rows in front of him. After the refreshments, I returned to the office and was told that the Maharshi would be in the main Hall soon and would remain there till 11 a.m. I retired to my bungalow and came to the Hall after a while.

The Maharshi was sitting on a comfortable, raised, spacious seat, reclining on a pillow. There was a clock on the wall just above his seat and another time-piece by his side with a few books near it. There were several books on a revolving shelf on the other side. National flags were flying freely above him, as well as at the entrance to the Hall and on the walls. Incense-sticks were burning in front of him. He was reading a newspaper when I entered. He had already made previous inquiries about the details of my journey and the arrangements made for my stay at the Asramam; he knew also my full programme. In very good, chaste Malayalam he asked me whether I was on my way to Chidambaram or back therefrom. I replied that I was on my return journey. This unexpected command he showed of my language was another great surprise to me. Later I found that the Maharshi is a linguist, knowing besides his Tamil in which he is a great author and poet, English, Sanscrit, Telugu and Malayalam, and that he spoke all the three South Indian languages with perfect ease.

Several visitors were squatting on the floor in front of him. There was perfect silence. People came in and went out without creating any disturbance to the place. Most of the people prostrated before Maharshi when they entered, and then took their seats on the floor. Some people brought small offerings like fruits and flowers. Some read out poems of devotion dedicated to him. Letters received at the Asramam were shown to him, and he read through them very carefully. Sometimes he made brief remarks about the contents of some of the letters or showed the contents to those nearby for reading. He also made comments about certain items in the newspapers. After reading each paper, he folded it with extreme precision along the central folds, so that the edges fell evenly, and took up another after keeping the first aside. He thus read

through many papers in English and Tamil. When a proof-print of a block of the wheel in the National Flag, intended for printing by the Asramam on the Tri-colour decorations, was brought to him, he closely examined every detail of it.

Exactly to the minute, he got up and retired for a while and returned to the Hall, also quite punctually. He was there till 11 a.m. and then we all went to the dining hall for the breakfast. The food was good, sumptuous but not at all extravagant, delicious and wholesome. The seating arrangement was the same as I witnessed early in the morning. There was no such distinction like privileged disciples and strangers. The visitors as well as the resident devotees came and sat at the next vacant place. The only convention that I noticed, and a very commendable one too, was that people commenced taking their food only when the Maharshi commenced taking his.

The Maharshi was again in the Hall at half past two in the afternoon, and with a small interval of a few minutes, he was there till dinner time. After 5 p.m. he moved over to the open hall in front of the main Hall and sat there till 7-30 p.m. At about 5-30 in the evening there was Veda Parayana and the singing of devotional hymns in Sanscrit and Tamil. I noticed that, while he appears quite unconcerned with things around him, he was not only attentive but also alert in correcting pronunciation in the recitation of Tamil verses. After dinner visitors retired to their respective quarters. They gathered again in the open hall early in the morning. I was ready there long before 5 a.m. Exactly as the clock struck five, the full lights were on and there was Upanishadic prayer which continued till about 6 a.m. It was very imposing. The whole of the Taittiriyopanishad was recited by the devotees in the Asramam, who had apparently a good training in such recitation. Certain devotional hymns in praise of the Maharshi were also sung.

I had my light refreshment before others, as a special case, since I had to catch a train back to Madras. This shows the absence of any rigid convention in the place. On the previous evening I was taken to a cosy small hermitage higher up on the hill behind the Asramam. That was the place where the Maharshi had spent several years with his mother who looked after him and the devotees who sought his presence. This hermitage commands a good view of the whole town with the

ancient temple and the extensive plain stretching far away miles and miles in front. One can also see from this hermitage an ancient fort far off on the other end of the plain. Within the last ten years the Maharshi might have gone to the hermitage only twice or thrice, but even today one finds the place maintained in an ideal condition.

While I was in the Hall during the one day I was in the Asramam, I took my seat along with others. I sat for hours together, both in the forenoon and in the afternoon; I also participated in the early morning prayer. Except for the first few words of greeting and my reply thereto I did not talk at all while I was in the Hall. But I did not go there either to discuss or to impart information. I was there to learn, rather to receive impressions; and I kept my mind in a receptive mood all along. I also knew that the Maharshi was making full inquiries about me and was giving instructions for my stay etc. Though there was no actual talk between us, there was an unbroken communion.

I have to give this brief sketch of my experiences in the Asramam in order that I may attempt to express in words, as far as it may be possible, the impressions I received there. What produced on me a great impression is the repose, the unruffled calmness that prevailed in the place as a result of the presence of the Maharshi. He seldom spoke. There was always a look of serene joy in his face; sometimes it glowed up into a lustre of bliss; at times I noticed that he rose into a state of *Samadhi* or trance. But that look of blissful peace was always there. I cannot say he was unaware of his surroundings; indeed, he was always in the fulness of unbroken awareness, but the surroundings made no fluctuations in him. When people prostrated themselves before him or when they offered presents, there was the same look on his face. The mode of salutation and the mode of approach made no difference to him. To him it was one, continuous state of serene peace and joy (*Ananda*).

This was the first time I had seen the Maharshi; but certainly it was not the first time that I had known him. I had read his books; I had read books about him. I had also reviewed some of them in the journal I edit, namely, the Adyar Library Bulletin. I am no stranger to religion either. The temple in my "Palace" and Sri Krishna, who is the presiding Deity there, have been as true to me in my daily life

as my home and my friends and relatives. To me the Deity in a temple was never a mere belief; it has always been an experience. I started my Sanscrit studies even as a little child, and had read through the *Puranas* before I joined a school. On the conceptual plane the Asramas of Maharshis like Vasishtha were quite familiar to me from very early boyhood. In this way, Sri Ramanasramam too, as the abode of a living Sage, was not something strange to me.

The central teaching of the Maharshi relates to the true nature of what we experience and what we speak of as "I". The "I" is not a mere accumulation of physical cravings and physical sufferings through frustration of one's effort to satisfy such cravings. The body and its wants are only certain adjuncts, quite accidental and temporary, veiling the eternal and absolute Spirit. We find a gradation in our capacity to know, and every gradation leads to the Infinite; the ultimate stage in this gradation is reached when one realises the true nature of one's own being; at this stage one realises also that the true nature of one's being is the true nature of the being of all.

On this question there are two commonly held views. One is that the development of physical matter is the only truth and ultimate truth. What is called "life" is only a phase in the development of matter. The other view maintains that the realisation of the Absolute is a migration from one stage of life to another, from material existence to spiritual life. What I could understand from the sayings of Maharshi and what I could gather from my personal impressions of the Asramam is that in realising the Absolute Truth there is something more than understanding a purely physical phenomenon; that in such a realisation of the Absolute there is no migration from one plane to another; and that it is only an expansion from a limited condition to the limitlessness of the Absolute. Thus, he who has the Vision of the Absolute, does not go out of the material and the physical planes. His former physical plane of experience expands and to it is added the experience of the higher and finer planes. He does not become unaware of the physical world, but becomes aware of the physical world as a mere tiny part of a far more expansive Absolute Reality. The very fact that Maharshi makes inquiries about the visitors, looks into his correspondence, pays attention to the cleanliness and tidiness of his environments, keeps certain programmes in his daily routine and sticks to them with punctuality, shows that to him this physical world is an integral part

of the Reality. Only it is not the whole Reality, and as such it is not the Reality understood in its true nature. I noticed that in the Maharshi's view of the Absolute there is a harmonious blending of science and religion.

Science without religion and religion without science cannot reach the Absolute Truth. The question why and how "matter" received the first urge to change and to evolve has not received the attention of modern science. If "life" is taken only as a later stage in the evolution of "matter", this difficulty cannot be surmounted. If "life" is taken as a basic and fundamental principle, that fundamental principle can give the true explanation for the first urge in "matter" to change and evolve. If, on the contrary, such a fundamental is not accepted, then the question will arise why even "matter" and its evolution should be accepted by science as a fundamental principle and as a physical reality; and if "matter" is not taken as a fundamental, we reach the *Madhyamika* position of there being only a void as the sole truth. If "matter", call it by any name in its original, starting stage, is fundamental, then we are compelled by scientific necessity to accept another fundamental called "life" to explain the change and evolution in matter. Matter cannot dispense with "life fundamental" but the "life fundamental" can dispense with matter, taking "matter" as only an evolute from "life" itself. As for the relation of "matter" to "life", there are three possible positions :—

(1) Both are fundamentals;

(2) "Life" is the absolute fundamental, while "matter" is related to it as subordinate fundamental;

and (3) "Life" alone is the fundamental and "matter" is an evolute from this fundamental.

Here we come to "dualism", "qualified dualism" and "monism". Whatever be the view held, "matter" alone cannot be the sole fundamental. If "life" is an accident in the course of the change and evolution in matter, then the question will arise why matter itself should not be accepted as an accident arising out of the "void", just as the phenomenon of "life" is accepted as an accident within the course of material change and evolution.

Scientists ignore scientists themselves and pay attention only to science. If we include, as rightly we should, the scientist as well in the sphere of what has to be considered in science, then we must accept "life" as a fundamental. This is what is meant by the harmonious blending of science with religion. Just as when matter is considered as fundamental, it (matter) is accepted as having evolved from a non-differentiated ultimate unity, call it electrons or gravitation, so also when life is considered fundamental, all the manifold and differentiated forms of life have also to be accepted as having evolved from a non-differentiated ultimate unity. This is the True Spirit; and all the individual "lives" are only the same ultimate fundamental life in a state of change and evolution. Change and evolution are in matter only; but life, being the cause for the urge in the matter to change and evolve, is reflected in this changing and evolving matter and is itself taken, through an illusion, to be changing and evolving.

That urge in the life-principle which produces the change and evolution in matter is called the *jiva* or the individual self. Really it is the matter that evolves through certain specific forms which together constitute the "individual", while the "life urge" remains unchangeable and immutable. When a "life-urge" does not produce such a change and evolution in matter, but remains as a pure urge, it is called *Isvara,* the Divine. In between the two, the *jiva* and *Isvara*, there are various gradations of "life-urges" in the universe and they form the so-called higher beings of the world, the semi-divine ones.

If only science will become truly scientific, that is, complete instead of being partial, and will include the scientist also within the scope of scientific investigation besides the material evolution, then religion becomes absolutely scientific. The content of religion may be something unknown at present; it is so simply because science refuses to consider such content; it is not itself unknowable.

At present the layman is aware of only the material world. And the material world is brought within his awareness by a series of impressions produced within the inner mechanism through the various sense-organs like sight, hearing and touch. We are not aware of light purely as light but only as certain vibrations associated with what is called matter. The same is the case with heat and sound. Now we know of electricity and other similar radio-active phenomena. If

we begin to analyse our inner mechanism of cognition and if we can develop its fuller powers, it would be possible for us to be aware of light as light, as a phenomenon in a finer state of the material evolution. At present we know it only as a phenomenon reflected in the material stage of that evolution. If we can expand our awareness in the fundamental and finer stages of evolution, then we will know phenomena like light and sound in their true nature and in their right plane.

After years of labour and investigation, scientists have been able to disintegrate an atom and release immense energy with which man has been able to destroy a whole city and to terrorise a whole nation. But no scientist knows what has happened to the constituents of an atom; no scientist has been able to control these constituents and to construct an atom. We can say that we have fully understood the atom only if we are able not merely to disintegrate the atom but also to constitute a fresh one. People who are acquainted with the Hindu *Puranas* must have heard of personalities therein described, who could discharge certain divine missiles but were unable to withdraw them. Present day science is in the same predicament so far as atomic energy is concerned.

Unless we develop our mental power, we cannot truly understand the nature of atomic energy, because when an atom is disintegrated the constituents dissolve into a plane of being which is beyond the scope of our material awareness and physical control. It is through Yogic practice that the "subject" can be trained and brought under control, just as the objective world is brought under control, as far as its material aspect is concerned, through experiments in a science laboratory.

This "subject" is a constant factor; it is by virtue of his being a constant factor that, as the investigating subject, he is able to take up a material body and put it aside and then take up a fresh one. Our physical consciousness cannot be aware of the causes revealing the true nature of the subject. In other words, that consciousness of which we are aware in its relation to material objects is too obtuse to comprehend itself when unrelated to matter. It is equally incomprehensible as a process determining its own nature and evolution. As such it is not able to control that process also. It is like a scientist

who is not aware of what happens to the constituents of an atom when it is disintegrated. Just as the scientist is unable to reconstitute an atom from its parts or control it, so also we are unable to control the process of the awareness of the investigating "subject". All the same, this process is within the awareness of consciousness in other planes. In Yogic practice, we expand our material consciousness and unite it with the awareness in finer planes. When thus there is a re-union of consciousness from the *Buddhi* plane down to the material plane, then such a one is able to vision the Absolute. He knows the true nature of the "life-urge" that has given rise to the production of individuality, and he also knows the relation of that "urge" to the totality of the fundamental principle which we designate "life". He becomes "one" with the Absolute.

There is no mystery about this becoming "one" with the Absolute; there is no superstition in it. It is a scientific truth. Man can destroy a life cell; man can *now* disintegrate an atom. No scientist has been able, and does not hope to be able, to constitute a life cell or to combine an atom from its parts. Man's capacity is limited to the physical plane, and he can operate matter in its physical aspect. Similarly, there is an aspect of man that has the capacity to operate matter in its finer planes. When these two aspects are united, then that individual has realised the Absolute.

Just as science has to invite religion to its fold, to make it truly scientific, religion has to entertain science in its fundamental aspect to make it a reflection of the Absolute Truth. If religion persists in saying that it has nothing to do with the field of science and that its function is in relation to That which is "beyond", religion too becomes partial in its scope. The true function of religion is to connect the two ends of the process of evolution in this world, and not to leave off one of the ends, aspiring to catch the other alone. It is futile to leave off the physical end of the chain of evolution in order that one may take hold of the *Buddhi* end, as it is to keep on to the physical end while ignoring the *Buddhi* end.

Teachers of religion had always to tackle two sources of danger. If man is taught that the phenomenon of the physical plane is as much a constituent of the true nature of the Universe as the final planes of evolution, he may confine all his attention to that phenomenon alone.

If he is taught that the physical plane, as compared to the vast region in the finer planes, is a negligible tiny bit, then he is apt to ignore the physical plane altogether, and thereby miss the complete truth. Further, one's indifference to the physical plane, consequent on the expansion of consciousness to comprehend the finer planes, is usually expressed through certain forms associated with *Sannyasa*; and the disciple may attach too much importance to such forms. Science without religion and religion without science are the results, respectively, of these two attitudes to the ultimate problems of the world.

Sri Krishna represents that aspect of the Hindu ideal which emphasises the importance of the physical plane in the evolution of the Universe, while recognising the existence of the finer planes. Buddha represents the other aspect of the Hindu ideal which emphasises the importance of the finer planes and necessarily inculcates an indifference to the physical plane. Both the Paths, the Path of *Karma Yoga* and the Path of *Sannyasa*, lead to the same end, namely, the union of the two ends of the evolutionary chain, the physical and the Buddhi ends.

Just as the results of the experiments by the scientist of one generation are utilised by the scientists of a later generation, similarly the results of the Yogic training in one birth can be utilised by the individual in a subsequent birth. Some nations are at present far ahead of other nations in the matter of scientific development due to the tradition of scientific investigation prevailing among those more advanced nations for many generations. Similarly some individuals are ahead of others in the matter of Yogic powers owing to the many previous births during which the former had the Yogic training. Buddha attained *Siddhahood* early in his life journey, but Kapila and Suka were born *Siddhas*. Throughout the history of the world, there have been individuals who attained *Siddhahood* without any effort by way of severe Yogic practices. Others had to undergo severe training in that particular life for a long time. There may be many who are unable to attain that *Siddhahood* even after the most rigid training; such individuals reap the final fruit in a later birth.

In every individual there are many planes of consciousness. To this extent all individuals are alike. But in the case of the normal man the consciousness in one plane is not connected to the consciousness in the other planes. When the barriers that keep the different

planes separated from one another are removed, there is an unobstructed flow of consciousness from one plane to another, and such an individual realises his true being as the "Absolute." Such a person is a *Siddha*, one who has realised or attained the Highest.

Personally, I have grown up in the Sri Krishna Discipline of *Karma Yoga*, where the other planes are accepted as an extension of the physical plane; and where, so long as we function mainly in the physical plane, we emphasise the importance of that plane. After all, the physical plane is as much the result of the "urge" from the pure "life-principle" as any other plane; and every tiny particle in the physical plane is enlivened by the same Divine Power. When I visited Sri Ramanasramam and spent a day there, the recognition of the physical plane aspect of evolution in the Universe created a great impression in me. The order, tidiness and cleanliness in the whole place, the exactness and strict punctuality in the daily programme, the arrangement for the physical comforts like food etc., all these convinced me that in the Maharshi's realisation of the "Absolute" there is the right expansion of the physical consciousness to comprehend the finer planes, and that his is not a case of attempting to leave off the physical plane end of the evolutionary chain for the sake of catching the other end of the chain, namely, the *Buddhi* end.

I have no claim to be an exponent of Maharshi's philosophy; I have no pretensions to be an intermediary between the Maharshi, who has become a *Siddha*, and others who are aspirants. I was born in an atmosphere of religion and had opportunities of learning the physical sciences as developed in modern times. I also took pains to study Indian philosophy in general and to understand the basic texts containing the doctrines of the great *Acharyas* and the later-day interpretations in the field of Indian thought. I am also acquainted with philosophy as developed in Europe during the last two and a half millenniums. To me modern science has never been a mere means for the attainment of any immediate practical end, nor was religion a mass of superstitions and beliefs. Philosophy was never a curiosity and a puzzle to me. Thus my intellect has been constituted and trained in a particular way. I have thought about the four distinct positions taken up by science and philosophy in regard to the fundamentals in the Universe, whether there is only one such fundamental, namely, the matter alone or "life" alone, or whether there are two distinct fundamentals, the matter and

the "life", or whether matter is a subordinate fundamental. There is a fifth possibility, namely, that there is no fundamental at all, but merely a void in this Universe.

I feel there is no mystery or superstition in the conception of the "Absolute" or its realisation. To me such an "Absolute" is a necessity in science and is implicit in religion. It was a great privilege for me to visit the *Asramam* of the Maharshi, while till now I have only read about *Maharshis* in *Puranas*. The presence of a Maharshi in this world at a time when there is utter anarchy in science, must be an eye-opener for the scientists, in that they will think of expanding the scope of science so as to include the truth of the scientist himself, instead of confining science to what the scientist is aware of as external, objective reality. At the same time, adherents of religion also must recognise the fundamental truth underlying the field of science as coming within its scope. The realisation of the Absolute is a harmonious blending of science and religion. This is the impression left on me during my visit to Sri Ramanasramam.



MY EXPERIENCES OF MAHARSHI

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It was in the year 1933 that a friend of mine spoke to me about Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and suggested that I should meet him. No sooner than he said it, a trip to Tiruvannamalai was arranged. On reaching Sri Ramanasramam, I went direct to where Sri Bhagavan was seated, prostrated myself before him and sat down on the floor at some distance. Though no words passed between us, I felt an indescribable influence and a sense of calmness setting over me. My stay at the Ashram on that occasion was only for about an hour. Then I took leave of Sri Bhagavan and left the place. I knew that my heart was being irresistibly attracted, as though by a mighty spiritual magnet, towards that Divinity in the human form of Sri Ramana seated on the couch. My feeling at the time of my departure from the presence of Sri Bhagavan can best be described in the words of the famous poet Kalidasa :—

या स्यति पुरश्शरीरम्
धावति पश्चादसंस्तुतं चेतः ।
चीनांशुकमिव केतोः
प्रतिवातं नीयमानस्य ॥

I repeated my visits whenever I found suitable opportunities to do so. As exigencies of official life made it impossible for me to prolong my stay at the Ashram during such visits, I prayed fervently to Sri Bhagavan that I might be granted many more opportunities to contact him. My prayer was answered, and I was soon posted as District Board Engineer of the then bifurcated District Board of North Arcot, with Headquarters at Tiruvannamalai! This act of Grace gave me ample opportunities to be in Sri Bhagavan's presence. I visited the Ashram practically every day when I was at Headquarters.

Not a week passed without some incident or other to convince me that Sri Bhagavan's merciful hand is ever extended to protect and succour those devoted to him. My faith increased by leaps and bounds. I found great solace in surrendering myself to him.

One or two *incidents* during this period may be recounted here, *miracles* to the faithful, but *casual coincidences* to the sceptics. One evening in the year 1936 when I visited the Ashram I decided to ask an important question of Sri Bhagavan concerning certain spiritual practices. But amidst the solemn hours of *Veda Parayana* in the evening and during meditation that followed I could not make up my mind to ask the question, and returned home somewhat disappointed. Early next morning, when I was lying half awake, Sri Bhagavan appeared before me in a dream and answered the very question which I had failed to put to him the previous evening. And before he vanished he also told me that he wanted a note-book. I said I had only one readily available and that it was of the octavo pocket-size. He said it was enough. I woke up with a pleasant thrill. The dream or vision, whatever one may call it, made such a deep impression on my mind that I could not delay carrying out the behest, however strange it might seem. After early bath and ablutions I traced out the pocket note-book and hurried to the Ashram. Prostrating myself before Sri Bhagavan as usual, I handed over the note-book to him. He received it smiling, and asked me why I took it to him, when I related to him, in a whisper, all about my dream. Immediately he called his personal attendant, the late Madhavaswami, and remarked to him "Did I not ask you last evening to fetch a good note-book to write down a Malayalam translation of the Sanskrit text of Sri Ramana Gita? You didn't bring one. Here is Nambiar who has brought it for me. It seems he had a dream in which I asked him for the book, and he has brought it." This incident aroused a great deal of interest among the devotees.[1]

On another occasion in the same year I dreamt of Maharshi as seated on his couch as usual, surrounded by a number of devotees seated on the floor and engaged in meditation. Among them I recognised a young devotee from Goa, seated in *padmasana* performing *pranayama.*

[1] I am told of a similar instance that happened subsequently. One of the devotees dreamt that Sri Bhagavan wanted some fountain-pen ink and he brought a large size bottle soon after an enquiry by the Sage for such ink. By the way, I may state that Sri Bhagavan uses the fountain-pen for such writing he may happen to take up.

I think he was known by the name, Sridhar. While he was doing *pranayama*, I saw, in the dream, sparks of fire rising from the base of his vertebral column up to his head, Bhagavan, who was watching this practicant, interjected "There is no need for all this gymnastics with breath-control. It is easier and safer to follow the method of Self-enquiry as enunciated by me." That is the sum and substance of the dream I had. Next day, when I went to the Ashram, I sought out this young Goanese Swami. I had no previous acquaintance with him and no occasion even to speak to him before. I gave him a full description of the dream I had. He was visibly moved and, somewhat to my embarrassment, embraced me with delight in the North Indian fashion. He said "Brother, I was all the while waiting for an opportunity to ask Bhagavan whether I should continue or give up this practice of *pranayama* which I have been steadily carrying on for the past several years. Indeed, last night while sitting in the presence of Sri Bhagavan I eagerly awaited an opportunity to put him the question but I couldn't find a suitable occasion for the purpose. Now, there is no need for me to ask him about it. Bhagavan answered it through you."

Such are some of the mysterious ways in which Sri Bhagavan has been consoling and comforting his devotees, clearing their doubts, imparting knowledge and generally aiding the aspirant on his path towards the ultimate goal of Self-realisation. He has many ways of "speaking" to his devotees, of which verbal talk is but one. They "see" him, wherever they may be, whether they are in or near the Ashram or far away from it, and get his unfailing guidance as an act of grace. Even the honest sceptic, if he is ripe enough to understand such guidance, would receive the Sage's silent, yet the most potent, benediction. And when he finds unmistakable confirmation of his "experiences" in the so-called realities of life, in his day to day conduct, he marvels. He is moved to revere with awe and love the Sage whose silent eloquence has transformed the lives of many an aspirant.

It is a pity that there are yet many in South India, who, having the easy opportunity of seeing Divinity in human form, fail to do so. I do not at all mean to say thereby that it is absolutely essential that one should go to Sri Bhagavan in person to receive his guidance and blessings. There are many a devout soul all over the world who contact him in their thoughts, feel his presence in ever so many ways and look up to him for his grace and illumination.

When I was in England last year, I went to see a venerable, old lady, by name Mrs. Victoria Doe. She must be nearing 80 and lives in a quiet house at 17, St. Martin's Avenue, Epsom, Surrey, with her only daughter, Miss. Leena Doe. She has never come to India, never seen Bhagavan Sri Ramana in flesh and blood. Yet, I was deeply moved by her devotion to him. She had read about him, prayed to him, meditated on him, and lives in him day in and day out. There was something trans-mundane, something related to a sphere other than the physical world, that occasioned my visit to this elderly lady, who was a recluse to the social life in England. It seems she had written to the Ashram that, much as she would have liked to go over to India to have a Darshan of Sri Bhagavan, her circumstances did not permit it, and that she was very desirous of at least meeting some one who had seen him and had had the good fortune to sit at his feet. Hence the visit I paid her, on the suggestion I received by a letter from the Ashram, was, in effect, the fulfilment of her long-cherished desire. She showed me sheaves of letters she took from a corner of a shelf, and kissed them with great reverence before handing them to me. All the letters were from the Ashram and were meticulously preserved for the past several years. She had also with her all the English publications of Sri Ramanasramam. She opened one of the books and, running her shaky finger along the writing on the first page "With Gracious Blessings from Sri Bhagavan" burst into tears of joy and devotion. She said "Mr. Nambiar, how lucky you are to have been able to be with him, to see him and hear him speak. Here, we treasure these books and letters as representing him. Now he has sent you here. I feel that he is with us now." Such love, such devotion to the Sage, so tenderly expressed to me, a total stranger to her till the other day, moved me to the depths of my being. Verily, his kingdom is the heart of the devotee, and I have always found him there enthroned.

I was told that the old lady had to undergo a serious operation two years ago, and, though the surgeon and others felt sure that at her age it would be difficult for her to stand the suffering, strain and risk involved, her supreme faith in Sri Bhagavan enabled her to bear it all with fortitude. After spending some hours at her cottage I returned to London, which was about three-quarters of an hour's journey by train.

A fortnight later I visited her once again. This time Miss. Doe met me at the door and escorted me to her drawing room, saying she had

a surprise awaiting me there; and lo! whom do I find sitting there? Mr. Bose, who had flown to London and likewise made it a point to see her as an ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan. Indeed, had she not prayed to Sri Bhagavan that she might have the opportunity to see some one of his devotees who, at least, had had the privilege to sit at his feet? It was a happy meeting for us two;—Mr. Bose and myself,—and one of the happiest moments in the life of the Does. We decided to put on record our visit by taking a few snapshots of us taking tea at her garden and by writing a joint letter to the Ashram about our meeting, signed by all the four of us.

After a couple of weeks I had to sail for United States, and Mr. Bose had to go to Germany, transformed into a Colonel on some technical mission connected with War Reparations. While touring the western states I had the good fortune to meet another great devotee of Sri Bhagavan, Mrs. Eleanor Pauline Noye who, unlike Mrs. Doe, could find the means and time to travel to India and to spend several months in the Ashram. She now lives in a quiet house in San Fernando Valley, bordering Hollywood in Los Angeles, California, yearning to sail for India a second time, as soon as a visa could be obtained for the journey. From my hotel in the centre of Los Angeles I went to Van Nuys, where Mrs. Noye awaited me with her automobile. Clad in a simple ochre-coloured frock, and looking for me eagerly, she burst into profuse tears as soon as our eyes met. She could hardly speak a few words of welcome, for such was her emotion on seeing one who had come from Sri Bhagavan. She drove me to her home where she lived with her sister and brother-in-law. We spent several hours talking about Sri Bhagavan. We also wrote a joint letter to the Ashram about my visit to that place. After spending the day in her apartments, which had all the air of a hermitage, I returned to my hotel in the evening. She returned my visit two days later, and we spent the evening talking about Sri Bhagavan and meditating on him. After dinner I took her back to San Fernando Valley. It was half past ten at night. Her sister had retired. Mrs. Noye and myself sat alone in her drawing room and decided to meditate on Sri Bhagavan. I had only a few minutes to spare, for I had to catch the last street car to go back to my hotel to pack up my kit and with my colleagues proceed to the Los Angeles Air Port to catch the plane bound for Nebraska. Well, both of us sat with closed eyes, meditating on Sri Bhagavan, whose physical body was more than ten thousand miles away. The peace that I enjoyed during those few

moments was indescribable. Verily, we felt his benign presence and his peace that filled our hearts. I took leave of her and retraced my way to the Van Nuys Tram, Terminus.

Some days later at Chicago, I received a letter from Miss. Doe to say that Mr. Bose would be arriving at New York by the time I returned there, but she regretted her inability to give me his address there. On flying back to New York I took rooms at a hotel known as The Embassy, and was wondering how I could get at the address of Mr. Bose. That night, thinking for a while about this question, I decided that I should try at the office of some Travel Agents, such as the American Express or Messrs. Thomas Cook & Son, and trace the whereabouts of Mr. Bose. Next morning I came out of my room and, standing at the elevator shaft, rang for the lift, to go down to the breakfast room. The lift arrived, the door opened and lo! Mr. Bose was there in the lift, to travel down to the breakfast room along with me! Might be, it was a coincidence, but something very remarkable indeed, if you will only know that there are 516 hotels in the City of New York and most of them are of such dimensions that even while living for weeks together in one and the same hotel, we could have missed to come across each other; and my stay in that city was only for a few days!

It may be interesting to know what Sri Bhagavan himself thinks of such incidents, the way he appears in our dreams, how we happen to get the right direction and why such things find accurate confirmation in the complexities of life. That at times at least he does bestow a thought on the antecedent events is confirmed by Sri Bhagavan's own words, as in the case of the note-book he wanted. But as one who has realised the Absolute Being transcending time and space, he hardly attaches any importance to events in life which is no better than a dream. Or, perhaps, what we consider to be an evanescent dream is just as much real to him as the life-dream is for us. The dream-life and the life-dream being at once equally real and unreal for him, their synthesis and correlation may be quite an easy affair for him, who is one with that Absolute which includes as well as transcends both the dream life and the life-dream. Moreover, can there be anything impossible for Sri Bhagavan, who ever abides as identical with the Absolute, which includes, sustains and engulfs the devotees as well as their life-dreams

and dream-lives.[1] No, especially so when the life-dreams and the dream-lives of his devotees are suffused with the benign influence of the Sage who has captivated their hearts. More than that it may not be possible to say for us, mortals still surrounded by the veils of *maya*. So, the poser still remains, namely, how Sri Bhagavan himself thinks of such incidents, as I have tried to describe, within my personal experience.

Let me refer to another point which has some bearing on the trend of the thoughts expressed above. One day when some of the devotees were engaged in a discussion regarding the lure of "*Siddhis*" to a *Sadhaka* and how indulgence in the practice of such supernatural powers was harmful, I put a question to Sri Bhagavan as follows. "Saints exist to save mankind. Now-a-days people are so materialistically minded that they do not believe in anything that cannot be seen or experienced physically, or in any phenomena that cannot be explained in the light of scientific knowledge possessed by them. These unbelievers could easily be converted and turned towards the spiritual path if only some miracles or supernatural phenomena are exhibited before their eyes by those possessing such psychic powers. The miracles performed by Christ form the back-bone of the Christian Faith. Why don't modern saints do miracles likewise for the salvation of mankind?" Sri Bhagavan replied by putting a counter-question "Did those saints of yore, referred to as having performed miracles, know and act as though they were performing miracles?"

Such cryptic remarks are characteristic of Bhagavan's talks with his devotees. They are like the ancient "*Sutras*" full of esoteric meaning. When you ponder over them, a storehouse of knowledge and understanding unfolds itself before you and dispels all dark doubts and dubious notions you may have as a result of your book-learning. Whatever be the value of miracle-making, he that thinks he has done some miracle and that too as a sort of propaganda for himself, is not worth the sight of that miracle with which he seeks to impress his audience.

I do not profess competence to interpret Sri Bhagavan's philosophy and teachings. The first publication I remember to have read on

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1 [It is quite possible that in the very fact of Self-realisation (i.e. the Realisation of one's identity with the Absolute) all these phenomena, correlating the dream-lives and the life-dreams, *are* an integral part, and they manifest themselves in the subtler planes of consciousness in some such way as suggested by the author of the previous article, **A Vision of the Absolute**. —*Ed.*]

his teachings is the booklet entitled "Who am I?". Having read it, I felt no need to read other books propounding some different approach to the realisation of the Eternal Truth. I am convinced that the method of Self-enquiry suggested in that great little book is all that is needed for the highest achievement in life, namely, Self-realisation. Really, to those who come into contact with Bhagavan, book-learning is of little consequence. Sri Bhagavan himself is the greatest Book for us. Let it be our endeavour to understand him. I am not a master of modern science, but I know enough to understand that Sri Bhagavan cannot be measured by the yard-stick of scientific knowledge. The latest discoveries in science, which are said to be so momentous as to revolutionise the world, have not even touched the fringe of true Knowledge. We might split the atom and produce radio-active clouds, potent enough to destroy the whole of mankind, but the why and wherefore of the phenomena still remain as much a mystery as it was hundreds of years ago.

I am not in the least bothered about the riddle of the universe; it doesn't matter to me whether the world is real or unreal. All that I cherish most is to live and act in Sri Bhagavan, and, with his image indelibly imprinted on my heart, to perform the duties allotted to me in life, for I trust and believe that SAGE RAMANA IS REALLY GOD-INCARNATE.



SRI RAMANA BHAGAVAN
THE KAILASAPATI AT ARUNACHALA

By

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HIS DARSHAN

Before I make an attempt to explain the profound significance of the teachings of the greatest Sage of our times, I would like to make a brief personal reference.

Though I am engaged in worldly activity, I had from my early boyhood some leanings towards the Spiritual. And when I happened to read Paul Brunton's remarkable books, the result was that a passion grew in me that I should see the Maharshi myself and not be content with the reading of books about him. By the Grace of God, I had the singular opportunity, some two years back, of fulfilling this desire, and here I must express my debt of gratitude to H. H. the Maharaja Padma Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana of Nepal, who being himself a devotee of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi gave me this opportunity of paying a visit to the Ashram, so far away from Katmandu (Nepal), to which place I belong.

On reaching Tiruvannamalai I went direct to the Ashram. When I was led to the presence of the Sage, I found him seated on the sofa, silent and serene, profoundly absorbed within himself. A number of devotees and admirers were around him, all evidently looking towards him with sublime veneration. The first thing that struck me in that peaceful hermitage was the total absence of distinction between men of different castes and creeds, of different races and religions, between a prince and a peasant, an ascetic and a *grihastha*. I must confess that I was equally surprised not to find at first sight anything particularly remarkable about the Maharshi. I had seen *yogis* before in the most secluded places up and beyond the great Himalayas. Now, when I saw the Maharshi at Aruna-

chala, I simply concluded, for the time being, that Maharshi was just one such *yogi* and no more. But soon my mind began to discern a great difference. Long before I reached the Ashram, I carefully formulated in my mind many questions I was to put to the Sage. When, however, I listened to what the Maharshi said in reply to questions concerning subjects more profound than those I had contemplated, I could not help feeling that all my questions, though well-devised as I thought them to be, ceased to have any particular significance. I found out later that many a visitor, almost all of them, had similar disillusionment. There must be something in the personality of the Sage to explain all this. But I was still very sceptical. Spiritual fool that I was, I very greatly regret that at that time it did not occur to me that I should touch the feet of the Master. I even abstained from prostrating myself at his holy feet!

Perhaps I am mixing up my sentiments,—those I had when I was in the presence of the Sage for the first time with those with which my being got intertwined some time later, before I left the Ashram. But I can do no better. Let me narrate the events that followed. Some devotee in the Ashram told me that according to the *Puranas*, while man gets Salvation if he dies at Kashi, he attains that State (*Moksha*) by mere remembrance of Holy Arunachala, wherever he may be. The Hill stood there before me in all its grandeur and seemed to elicit my unexpressed assent to that statement. I thought it was my duty to pay my homage to the Lord of the sacred Hill, Who is worshipped in the big temple, within a mile from the Ashram. So I approached the Maharshi and took his permission. Since I was to leave Tiruvannamalai the same day, I intended to spend the afternoon at the temple, which I reached at about 3 p.m.

The temple of Lord Arunachala is a gigantic structure, stupendous and awe-inspiring; and it stands almost immediately at the foot of the ancient Hill. As I entered the temple, a smart, young Brahmin (one of those who conduct the rites of worship) offered to be my guide and took me into the various sanctuaries within the huge compound enclosed by massive stone walls nearly forty feet high. Above the walls rise the temple towers, the one on the eastern side being as high as 210 feet. My guide was quite communicative and explained to me the significance of the various sanctuaries and pointed out a closed hall,

where our glorious Maharshi did his *Tapasya*. In one of the sanctuaries I was attracted by the Image of Ganesha. I was asked to make offerings to the Lord of Success, and I did what I was told. We proceeded further into the interior, towards the inner temple which contains the sanctuary of Lord Arunachala. But the gates of this temple were closed and my guide told me that they would be opened soon, and that in the meanwhile we might go to the sanctuary of Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Arunachala. The two sanctuaries adjoin each other. After paying my obeisance to the Goddess, I returned with the guide to the gates of Lord Arunachaleswara's temple, which were still closed. While I was waiting there with my guide, a young man, who was also a visitor to the Ashram in the morning, came to the place. We had a discussion on some of the aspects of Bhagavan Sri Ramana's teachings. The young man seemed to have been impressed with my observations. By that time the inner temple gates were thrown open and my guide took us into the interior which was rather dark. A small oiled wick-flame was flickering, a few yards in front of us. The young voice of my companion shouted "Arunachala!" All my attention was directed to the one purpose of seeing the Image or *Lingam* (which symbolizes the Supreme Lord, Eternal and Unmanifest) in the *Sanctum Sanctorum*. But, strange to say, instead of the *Lingam* I see the image of Maharshi, Bhagavan Sri Ramana, his smiling countenance, his brilliant eyes looking at me. And what is more strange, it is not one Maharshi that I see, nor two, nor three,—in hundreds I see the same smiling countenance, those lustrous eyes, I see them wherever I may look in that *Sanctum Sanctorum*. My eyes catch not the full figure of the Maharshi, but only the smiling face, from the chin above. I am in raptures, and beside myself with inexpressible joy ......that bliss and calmness of mind I then felt, how can words describe? Tears of joy flowed down my cheeks. I went to the temple to see Lord Arunachala, and I found the living Lord as he graciously revealed himself. I can never forget the deep, intimate experience I had in the ancient temple.

I hurried back to the Ashram, for I had to catch the train that leaves Tiruvannamalai the same evening. It was a quarter to five and Maharshi was about to go for his usual evening stroll by the Hill-path. A Swami presented me to the Sage, and told him in Tamil that I was to leave the Ashram immediately to be in time at the Station. Maharshi looked at me and smiled. I felt he was

enquiring whether I felt satisfied with what I saw in the temple. Satisfied! Sri Bhagavan's Grace has captivated my heart. My gratitude to him knows no bounds. I lovingly cherish the sublime experience I had.

That vision I had in the temple, people may call a hallucination, but that bliss, that peace, that love, that depth of feeling which melted my very being and made it over to the care of the Lord, the joy and deep sense of gratitude I now feel while I recollect the past,—these certainly are no optical illusion. The Lord in my heart is my eternal witness, I meekly put myself under his care, and I am his for ever.

Thus ended my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam. But before two years had lapsed, the desire to see the Sage once again began to burn within my heart. Fortunately, that year too my wish was fulfilled. In the meantime I heard many more things about Sri Maharshi, and, above all, I minutely studied and thought over his life and teachings, which are so closely related to each other. I am now no longer a sceptic. The Lord be blessed!

HIS TEACHINGS

In my humble opinion it is impossible for one to obtain by means of the study of books that change in one's outlook on life, that transformation of one's being, which one in earnest search of Truth realises by a personal contact with the Sage, reinforced by such personal experience as his Grace may offer. Nevertheless, the study of spiritual literature has its use, because man seeks to understand things on a rational basis, and what his reason does not sanction he finds it difficult to believe. From this point of view Bhagavan Sri Ramana's teachings have a supreme importance to the seeker of Truth.

1. SELF ENQUIRY

The first question Sri Ramana wants each of us to put to himself is "Who am I?" He declares that it is of little use learning other things so long as one does not seek to know oneself. It looks so natural to us that we should identify ourselves with the body. Such identification seems almost irresistible, almost inevitable. And to extricate oneself from one's identification with the mind and intellect appears next to impossible. The first thought that rises within us when we wake up from sleep, is the idea "I-am-the-body." One must grasp that in this

idea there is a physical as well as a psychic element, each supporting the other. The "I"-thought is the first thought in the mind, and it is also the thought underlying every other thought. All other thoughts, of whatever description they may be, are corollaries to it. The great Sage explains to us brilliantly how this identification of oneself with the body, mind and intellect is completely wrong. The body has been changing continuously with the passage of time. In spite of all these changes that come about us through a long succession of years, we feel we are the same person now that we were in our childhood. During all these years our mind has undergone rapid changes, it has out-grown many of its former tendencies and dispositions, it has lost many and gained many more new. At times it is like a boiling cauldron, and at other times it is placid. At still different times it is inert as if it were dead, which last mentioned condition is called "sleep". In spite of all these changes from moment to moment through a succession of years, the "I" has remained the "I". What is this unchanging factor in the cycle of changes that revolves with lightning speed?

This "I", the one thing we cannot do without, is an indubitable entity. If doubt occurs, it becomes the doubter himself. We see innumerable thoughts and feelings issue forth from within. There must, therefore, be some unfailing inner source from which the varied modes of thought and feeling rise up like the waters from a powerful hot-spring. It is also clear that the "I" exists during all the three states of the mind, namely, the wakeful, the dreaming and the sleep states. Some may doubt if the "I" exists in deep sleep, but this doubt is easily dispelled. True, when we are in profound sleep we are conscious of neither the body, nor the mind, nor, therefore, the world. But, surely, this does not mean that in deep sleep we cease to exist. If we are conscious of neither the body, nor mind, nor world during sleep, it only means, the Sage declares, these three have nothing to do with the "I" as such. It is they that cease to exist and not the 'I'. The "I" is always the "I"-consciousness; since the "I" subsists during all the three states of the mind, it means that the "I"-consciousness must have also subsisted during deep sleep. If we are not aware of the "I" during sleep, it is because we are not fully aware of it while awake. This "I" with the fullest self-awareness is therefore the one, eternal Reality, it is that which ever-persists, which pervades and transcends all the lower states of consciousness which cannot exist but for the eternal "I", the Self Supreme.

According to Sri Ramana all our knowledge of the arts and of sciences we boast of, is really ignorance, because this knowledge always presupposes our identification with the little body, which identification is our primal ignorance or the "original sin," for which the Western theologians have been groping, but which they are very reluctant to accept. For, how can the mind, assiduously propitiated by the intellect, feeling and volition accept *that* as real which would stultify the mind itself? It is natural for the mind to move in the vicious circle it has created. It is this vicious nature of the mind that must be destroyed, and such destruction is possible only through Self-Knowledge. Therefore, Self-Knowledge alone is worth striving for. For effecting the destruction of the vicious nature of the mind, the Sage prescribes the method of *Atma-vichara*, which becomes a really effective means to Knowledge, if the aspirant is pure at heart.

It is no doubt hard for most of us to accept fully and much more to put into direct practice the hypothesis that Self-Knowledge alone is true Knowledge, and that all other knowledge on which our life-activity depends is false. The point is that if we can really accept the hypothesis with all its implications, it only means that we are already *Jnanis*, a claim not easy to substantiate. But if we cannot practise the highest precept he has placed before us, we can at least understand the plain statement that unless we know the truth about ourselves, we cannot know the truth about other things, including the life we lead and the world we see. Even in this limited sense the Knowledge of **अहंपदलक्ष्यार्थ** is alone true Knowledge.

2. *THE WORLD PROBLEM*

Under the previous head it was shown that the one Reality is the Self or pure I-Consciousness and that the mind and world are unreal. In this ultimate view of existence, there is no world problem at all. But, as a matter of fact, we consider ourselves as being not only *in* the world but also,—whether consciously or (as is more often the case) unconsciously—as being *of* the world. For, what is all our worldly activity, done with seriousness of purpose generating conflicts, passions and prejudices, due to but the unprofessed assumption that we are *of* the world? Hence arises the world problem. How then shall we solve it?

Firstly, we have the evolutionary theory, buttressed by the evil influence of the Spencer school of Western philosophy. Man, we are

told, has been evolving himself from the barbarity of jungle life; and these theorists also say that the jungleman's code of law was governed by the principle, "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth," and that since then through science we have attained a higher civilisation. Nowadays the followers of this evolutionary school of thought are chary. They are puzzled with the turn science has taken. For, who will say that the wholesale destruction of cities is in any way less barbarous than the jungle warfare of primitive days? Again, we have another set of theorists who follow Karl Marx, who see nothing but class conflict in social life, and who declare that rank materialism alone will prevail and that spiritual values are a myth. Equally powerful are those other theorists who propound the right of "higher races" to rule over the "lower", the right of the stronger nations to guide the destinies of the weaker, and the sovereign right of each of these stronger nations to do what it likes. The result is global war that engulfs humanity in misery, death and destruction.

Following the analytical method of enquiry let me suggest an approach to this world problem, an approach that is implicit in the teachings of Maharshi. Unless there is a national problem that militates against the right of some other nation, there can be no international, and much less, a global problem. Therefore, the seed of conflict between two or more nations must be found individually among these nations themselves. In other words, the world problem is essentially a national problem. Similarly a national problem becomes a provincial problem, which in its turn becomes an urban-*cum*-rural problem, which finally reduces itself into an individual problem. Is not the world problem, thus, an individual problem only? Above all, would not the entire direction in human affairs change radically if the individuals in power in each state had the true, spiritual outlook, which will give precedence to moral and spiritual values instead of to economic and political power? Is there any other way of reaching the Spirit except by turning the mind inward in search of the "I"? And if a person ignores the "I" and the realisation of its perfection, will he ever be able to do real good to society? Reformation must first come in the individual himself, before he can presume to reform society. Let us all frankly admit that we have shamefully shifted the basis of responsibility for winning perfection, peace and happiness from the individual to the society, each attributing evil to the world without and wilfully ignoring his own spiritual needs. Is it not because we are ignorant of the true nature of the "I" that

we multiply so-called needs, thereby making society a complicated mosaic in which nothing seems to be in its rightful place? Is is not, therefore, the duty of each individual that he should seek first the truth about himself? Alas! This supreme *Dharma* of reaching one's own perfection we never persuade ourselves to seek and realise!

Here lies the significance of Sri Ramana's call, "Know thyself!"

3. *THE PROBLEM OF REALISING HAPPINESS*

If there is one problem in this world which is at the root of all other problems and which is common to all mankind, it is that of realising happiness. It would, therefore, be both interesting and instructive to see how Sri Ramana solves this.

Many people go to the Sage and relate to him their own worries in life. Some seek his advice as to how they can be free from the worries in life. They cannot do away with their worries, they say, though, apparently, nothing external is wanting to make them fully free from all wants. In reply the Sage reminds them that, as a matter of fact, they know by their experience that these worries have never affected them in their sleep. And surely they are the same beings in the wakeful state as they are in sleep. It follows that worries cannot touch their integral being. Moreover it is quite possible, if we have the strength of will, to dispense with numerous things in life and with the empty, false notions to which we become enslaved, through the wrong identification of our pure being with the ephemeral ego. We have fears and worries, but why? Because we assume that we are strong or weak, without truly knowing ourselves or even caring to know what we are. For, we think, — with what justification it is difficult to understand — that this body is ours, this mind, these things, we say, we own and the circle of relations, — all these things are ours. Are we right in having such a belief? Are we sure who we are that we may thereafter trust in the truth of these vital assumptions? We want to draw a circle without caring to decide, nor even to consider in the first instance as to where the centre should be. And having drawn hardly a fraction of the circumference, we go on shifting the centre. What wonder, then, that in the end we do not at all complete the perfect figure of a circle, but leave unfinished some grotesque diagram that can but ill fit into the world picture? To be able to achieve anything commensurate with man's intellectual capacity, he must

seek in the first instance the centre of his being and be firmly established therein. To achieve this end *Atma-vichara* is the means *par excellence.*

The reader should not confuse one's own suffering with the problem of unhappiness. Many a heroic soul has felt abiding happiness of the spirit amidst intense suffering. In fact, suffering has no terrors for the strong in spirit, nor is it an unmitigated evil for the devout at heart. "Suffering turns men towards their Creator," quotes Dr. Brunton. It is the age-old maxim, quite familiar to the Indian mind, and what a world of truth is contained in those six words! We are never disillusioned by the trivialities and transience of the world while we have an easy time of life. It is suffering alone that makes even the most foolish and light-hearted among us question, however superficially, the lasting nature of worldly pleasures. It gives us the direct urge to discover a more dependable, a more permanent source of peace and happiness than what external life can offer. The wise know that life involves suffering. All talk about helping others, while one is not prepared to carry the cross oneself, is at best a form of self-deception. Unless a man is prepared for his own suffering, he will not have the courage to help others in their need. Above all, man will not know what others' suffering is unless he has himself undergone similar experience or has at least lived through such experience by virtue of sympathy born of close association. If, therefore, we are wise, we should take pains and sufferings, when they come to us, as our friends and not our enemies. And when we habitually take up this attitude, we shall be able to do real good to ourselves and also to others.

4. *WHO IS GOD?*

The conception of God is as old as man's civilization. No doubt, in our ignorance we have not hesitated to give limited and crude interpretations of God. These interpretations being not unoften contradictory to one another, perhaps more sceptics have been created thereby among the rationalists than believers among the credulous. Sri Krishna of the *Gita* is very commonly conceived as a charioteer giving verbal *upadesa* to Arjuna, as if that human form represents essentially the Lord. But in the *Gita* itself He declares that He is the Self of all seated in the Heart, and that He is the Universal Being beyond name and form, the One, Eternal Reality. The Upanishads have declared with great dash and boldness that what is called God is our own Self. A living testimony

of this truth we have in the Sage of Arunagiri. The "I" is God and God is the "I". Anyway, is anything conceivable without this "I"? Is it not, then, clear even on a superficial examination of the question that the "I" is the greatest Reality? The trouble with us is that being taught from childhood to give thought and attention only to conceptions with which the mind is familiar, though complex by nature and highly imaginative, we have ceased to understand the need for giving a little consideration to simple truths. One does sometimes feel like lamenting with Wordsworth, "What man has made of man!"

5. *IS THE WORLD REAL OR UNREAL?*

Many people's aversion to the *Advaitic* tradition is due to its emphasis on the blatant unreality of the world. Whether this aversion is justified or not, there is some reason to explain its existence in the mind of man. The entire edifice of our culture and civilization is based on the foundation of our belief that the world is real. When, therefore, we are told that the world is unreal, we are not only non-plussed but irritated. Dr. Johnson's refutation of Berkeley's philosophy is a very apt illustration. Sri Ramana, if I understand his teachings aright, does not consider the question of reality or otherwise of the world as of first importance. According to him, it is both undesirable and foolish to be disputing about the reality or unreality of the world, when one has not the right knowledge of oneself. He shifts the emphasis from the question, "What is the nature of the world?" to the much more vital question, "Who am I?" This in my view, is the most substantial contribution the Maharshi makes to world thought.

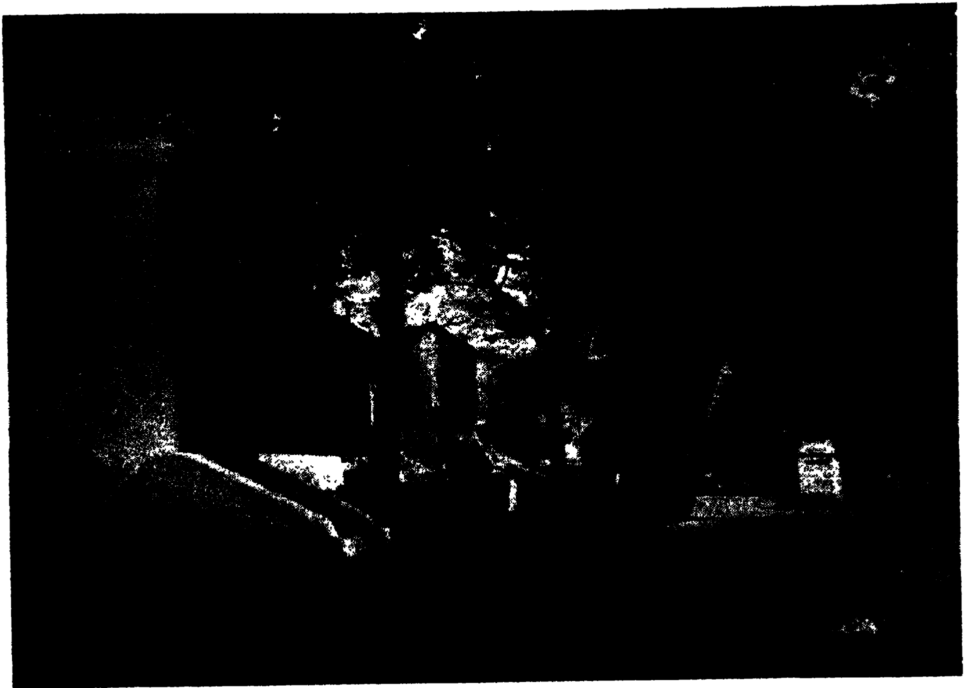
I may mention here that aspect of Sri Ramana's philosophy which makes the greatest appeal to me. When one is prepared to ignore the world, that is, if one has the true, inward *vairagya* or dispassion, there is little reason in maintaining, as some orthodox interpreters of Hindu *sastras* do, that one cannot really seek the Truth unless one takes up *Sannyasa Asrama*. The Maharshi never says any such thing. According to him, the non-identification of oneself with the body and mind is true *Sannyasa*. It is not work that is the hindrance, the Sage declares, but the notion "I-do-the-work." Life is such that, whether a person is a *Sannyasi* or a *Grihastha*, he cannot entirely eschew all work. He may leave his home, but he cannot run away from the world. So then,

what he has to renounce is not work or the world but the ego that claims to do the work or seeks to renounce the world. He must accept and follow all the rules of good conduct, but in addition to that he must realise their inward significance, namely, the destruction of the ego in and through such activity.

CONCLUDING APPEAL

In the foregoing attempt I cannot claim to have done more than touch the fringe of the Maharshi's methods of teaching, in which his oral instructions given as replies to the individual interrogator himself are more potent than the written teachings, and still more potent is the Maharshi's silent way of transforming the outlook of the true aspirant through inward but indubitable experience. My earnest conviction is that both believers and sceptics,—the sceptics more than the believers—will benefit immensely by a little close association with the Sage. How sceptics become believers in the light-radiating presence of the "Light of Arunachala", Bhagavan Sri Ramana, is quite an ordinary occurrence of Ramanasramam. My own experience may be adduced in proof of the point. To quote Mr. Grant Duff, "Should those who have it in their power to visit the Ashram delay, they will have only themselves to blame in future lives."





SKANDASHRAM (the Sage's abode from 1916 to 1922) nestling in the Hill-side.



ARUNACHALESWAR TEMPLE and the Town, a magnificent view from the Skandashram.





TO

MAHARSHI RAMANA
THE MERCIFUL MASTER

WILL YOU NOT LET ME GO?

Will you not let me go?
Like some insidious druggist you would make
Me come with craven pleading to your door,
And beg you of your mercy let me take
From out your potent wares a little more.
And so,
You will not let me go.

Will you not let me go?
Here, in an alien land I pass my hours,
Far from my country and all former ties.
A restless longing slowly me devours
That me all worldly happiness denies.
And so,
Will you not let me go?

Will you not let me go?
You tell me, "Yes, I do not keep you here."
That's but your fun. Why else then should I stay?
While months pass by and mount up year by year,
So that it seems I'll never go away.
And so,
You do not let me go.

Will you not let me go?
Nay, I'm a fool, I cannot if I would.
I am your slave, do with me what you will.
That you should all deny, well, that is good
If so it pleases you. I'll speak no ill.
And so,
Refuse to let me go!

Will you not let me go?
I'm only sorry wax beneath your hands.
You've striven long to mould me into shape.
Your endless patience no one understands;
Your boundless love there's no one can escape.
And so,
You'll never let me go.

Will you not let me go?
I am a fool that I should try to flee;
For here, there is a peace I'll never find
When I the least am separate from Thee;
Then I'll be but a slave to caitiff mind.
And so,
I do not wish to go.

—Sadhu Arunachala
(Major A.W. Chadwick, O.B.E.)

आबद्धाञ्जलिपल्लवैस्तरुवरैरभ्यर्च्यमानं सुमै-
रासन्नामृतचारुनीरलशितं शिष्यैरशून्यान्तरम् ।
आबद्धामलराजयोगमखिलक्लेशान्धकारच्छिदं
वन्दे निन्दितसत्यलोकविभवं दिव्याश्रमं देव तं ॥

Surrounded by plants and creepers lovely with bunches of flowers raised in worship of You; flanked by springs of nectar-like water; always crowded with disciples and *rajayogis;* remover of the darkness of misery; more glorious than *satya-loka,* Sri Ramanasrama, I bow to You.

AT SRI BHAGAVAN'S FEET

Bodily far away from Arunachala, but spiritually at Bhagavan Sri Ramana's Feet, I am just thinking with reverence that half a century has passed by since the young Venkataramana came to Tiruvannamalai.

O Maharshi ! I take the liberty of celebrating this date as Sri Bhagavan's real birthday.

I celebrate it by throwing myself in the dust at Sri Bhagavan's Feet yet with more reverence, awe and humility, and by trying to listen Maharshi's voice in my own heart.

— *D. Fuchsberger*
(Bratislava, Czechoslovakia)

SURRENDER

I say that I have surrendered,
But what have I given up?
It's easy to talk in this fashion
Though it's nothing but empty words,
Which come from the tongue so glibly
In a sentimental way.

I'm tired of all talk and no action,
But better than either of these
Is the silence of the Spirit,
The Silence we find with you,
A potent and thundering Silence
Which swallows all up in itself.

Like the magnet which pulls at the iron
You draw me and hold me so fast,
But why do you leave me in this way
With the work only just begun?
You make me your slave and a pris'ner;
For You that's all right, not for me.

You leave me my mind with its worries,
Why don't you take that with the rest?
For the mind is the cause of all trouble,
Creating the world and its ties.
The things that I say I've surrendered
I haven't surrendered at all.

It's all just show and pretending,
Prostrating and that sort of thing.
Quoting of texts and of *Shastras*,
Perfect in word not in deed.
I'm sick, sick, sick of this business,
I want to start fresh but I can't.

So please just stop being the magnet,
Don't take me at all or take all!
Transmute me until I am blended
With You so that both are as One.
When there's no longer the talk of surrender
Then alone has surrender begun.

—Sadhu Arunachala.
(Major *A. W. Chadwick*, O.B.E.)

THE GLORIOUS RAMANA

ब्रह्मश्रीमान् रमणचरणो मोहमुन्मूल्य दृश्यान्
भावान्भिन्नानपि समतया भासयन्स्वात्मभासा ।
आखण्ड्यंस्वंरसमनुभवन्प्राप्तभेदप्रमोषो
गायन्स्वैरं दहरकुहरे नर्तको नानटीति ॥

The most sacred and glorious Ramana sings and dances ecstatically in the Heart-cave, and, uprooting ignorance by His own Light, ever revels in and reveals the Oneness of Reality amidst the illusion of apparent multiplicity, just as an expert dancer (who, with a melodious voice and graceful step, sings and dances in the dance-chamber, and experiences the wholeness of joy, and reveals the one delight that expresses itself through the different moods and poses).

श्री R. S. वेंकटरामशास्त्रिविरचितम् —*Sri R. S. Venkatarama Sastri*, M.A.,
Professor, Sanscrit College,
Mylapore.

SRI RAMANA, THE SELF SUPREME

O meek and gentle Child beloved,
Ancient, immobile holy Mount
Crowned with the cool, red fire of Dawn;
O Babe of Love, O Hill of Hope,
Dwell in our hearts and make us whole.

For fifty years, here, in men's sight,
You have lived the life of the Seer, the Free,
The Knower who knows as He is known;
Spreading by Silence stronger than speech
Unseen light and unheard Melody,
Courage, clearness, calmness divine.

You are the Perfect One praised of old,
The Gita's *Jnani,* the *Jivanmukta*
Of "The Crest Jewel of Discrimination";
Inactive Doer of all deeds done,
Wishing no wish and taking no side;
Contemplative witness of things that pass,
Steadily stablished in *Satchidananda*;
Nothing topical, temporal, novel,—
No noise, no struggle and no change—
The pole-star, Truth, for ever the same.

Tossing on the space-time ocean
In the frail bark of body-mind,

Troubled by tides and heady currents,
We have jettisoned hope and charity;
Still we clutch at the phantom Faith
That we shall reach firm land at last
And be planted again on the ground of Spirit,
The paradise lost but to be regained.
We mumble the names of God-Men who
Have walked on the waters in times past—
Over the treacherous waves of *samsara*—
And reaching safe the other shore
Have been canonized, deified, stellified.

And our faith grows fresh because we find
That in our own day four children of Bharata
Have trodden anew the four thrice-blessed
Paths of Love, Work, Surrender and Knowledge-
Bengal's Gadadhara, Gurjara Gandhi,
The Integral Yogi of all Eurasia,
And You, the Self Supreme Eternal
Incarnate in time in *Dravida Desa*
As the Boy Beatified, Bhagavan Ramana.

Steep uphill is the way You have taken
To the shining mountain-top of truth;
Steep, yet short and straight and clear,
Free from darkness, confusion and peril.

Others, in life's strenuous battle,
Wielding mighty weapons of morality,
Have slain with pain, one after one,
Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, envy,
The hydra-heads of the single ego;
Or, shedding copious torrents of tears,

And kindling blazing flames of devotion,
And heavily hammering fancies with facts,
Have tempered and moulded the indurate "I".
They have fought with Vali face to face
And shared their strength with the evil foe.

But You, a Witness, a young Spectator,
Looking calmly on Death as on Life,
On the dark cloud and the silver mist,
By scientific self-analysis
Have pierced and passed the empty ego
And its shadow-show of false phenomena,
And have found and fed the Living Light,
The Self Supreme, the Self of All.

"Judge not others," Jesus said;
But made each mortal his own judge
To slay the goats and save the sheep
Among his *gunas* evil and good.
"Love thy brothers; judge thyself,"
Enjoined the Lord; but we go on
Judging our brothers and loving ourselves.

Neither judgment nor love You teach—
For there is NO OTHER to judge or love,
No boon to ask, no door to knock;
And all good things will come unsought
Like leaves and flowers to a tree in spring
When *Viveka* wide awake
Turns inward, enquiring "Who am I?"
And undeluded by darkness and death •
Sees only the Bright, Immortal Self,
The Being whose nature is Knowledge and Bliss.

Those who practise Your presence lose
Their ephemeral ego, and find
In you the Goal and the Way; and proceed—
Like trustful pilgrims on a train—
Fortified by the heavenly viaticum
Of Your Forty Verses on Truth—
Unresting, unhasting, in calm content
Along the *Jiva's* joyous journey
From the many, tinted, peripheral points
To the one white seminal core
Of the single, complex sphere of existence;
From partial life to Immortal Perfection,
From *samsara* to *Sat-Chit-Ananda*

O God Without, Guru of Grace
Who guide us well to God within,
Blessed the eye, the mind, the heart
Surrendered to Your sovereign sway.

Rock of Faith, O Dawn of Hope,
Child of Charity, Holy Sage,
O Silent Presence on the Mount,
O Tiger bright with burning eyes!
You have sought us, and You have caught us;
Forsake us not; consume us quite:
Sri Ramana of Aruna.

—*K. Swaminathan*, B.A. (OXON)
(Presidency College, Madras.)

॥ चिरजीवमुक्तो रमणः ॥

LIBERATED RAMANA

कल्याणसर्वगुणपूर्णमपास्तदोष-

माश्चर्यचर्यमखिलाश्रितपारिजातम् ।

शोणाद्रिवासरसिकं चिरजीवमुक्तं ।

श्रीमद्रमारमणयोगिनमानमामः ॥

Our salutations to Sri Ramana, the Yogi, Who is Sriman Narayana Himself, Who is the Perfection of all beatific virtues, Who has cast off all flaws of life, Whose conduct is wonderful, Who is the Celestial Tree of *Parijata* fulfilling the desires of all that resort to Him, Who is fond of residing in Sonagiri and Who has long been Liberated during life.

—Mahamahopadhyaya,
Ubhayavedanta,
R. V. Krishnamacharya Swamy

महामहोपाध्याय उभयवेदान्त
श्री कृष्णमाचार्यस्वामिविरचितम्

MAHARSHI SRI RAMANA
THE SAGE OF MYSTIC SILENCE

By
Rai Bahadur **Madan Mohan Varma**, M.A.,
Registrar, University of Rajputana, Jaipur.

I

I feel privileged to write my humble mite of homage on the auspicious occasion of the completion of 50 years since the advent of Maharshi Sri Ramana at the Holy Hill of Arunachala. Sri Ramana's life is now widely known and needs no re-capitulation. He was one of those ripe but rare souls who realise the Divinity of the Soul by a single touch of the Spark in their very 'teens. So it happened with him. A small family affair was enough to turn him God-wards. A short vision of "death" of the body was enough to make him taste the nectar of the Self Immortal! And no sooner had he landed in Arunachala, the Sacred Hill associated with Divinity, than he slipped into *Samadhi*. Quick indeed was—as it must have been—the response of *Arunachala* to the moving outpouring of the young *Bhakta's* heart in the spontaneous verses known as *Akshara Manamalai*; among them:

"I came to feed on Thee,
But Thou hast fed on me,
Now there is Peace,
O Arunachala!

"As snow in water,
Let me melt as Love in Thee,
Who art Love Itself,
O Arunachala!"

For fifty years the *Purusha* has chosen, for the benefit of humanity, to keep the mortal frame known as Ramana, irradiating through it to all who can see, hear and "feel" the LIFE sustaining the frame. Humanity reaches its high water-mark in such a life, so indeed such a life is a blessing to humanity.

II

Some good *karma* of Paul Brunton brought him into touch with the Maharshi. In his book "A Search in Secret India", more than two chapters are devoted to his discovery of the Great Sage and the transmutation wrought into his being by the Sage's spiritual orb. And Paul Brunton earned the further good *karma* of making Arunachala known to a much wider circle of readers than before. The writer of these lines himself owes the blessed introduction to the Maharshi to the said book of Paul Brunton.

Over six years ago, shaken by a personal bereavement, the reaction of which at once laid bare the hollowness of the writer's previous religious studies and pretensions spreading over 25 years, and epitomised his deluded intellect, the writer dragged himself over a distance of over 2000 miles to Tiruvannamalai. It was literally a dragging. He had not the strength of mind and body to do anything or to travel. But he had read Brunton's inspiring description of the Maharshi, and "took his chance" of being blessed with some peace of mind, possibly with some spiritual touch, possibly with some "miracle"!

Five days at the Sage's *Ashrama*: but no miracle. The writer came back somewhat soothed but also somewhat disappointed. He had hurled scores of "questions" on religious matters at the Maharshi: What is death? Is there life after death? Is there re-incarnation? How to contact the beloved dead? How to get into touch with the higher planes? Do "Masters" exist? Is there an Inner Government of the World? What are the steps on the Spiritual Path? And so on and on . . . . But the Maharshi was indifferent. Only when the writer sought his permission to leave—with sorrow still darkening his heart—he smiled a gracious blessing which is still fresh in the writer's memory, a blessing which seemed to arise from the secret recesses of the Heart, and the like of which he had never received before from any mortal.

And as the writer looks back over these six years, he wonders! He had occasion to meet many a great man in the past, to listen to their orations, to read their teachings and to follow their instructions. Often he was inspired and uplifted. But notwithstanding much effort, like the sea-wave it all appeared to recede as time passed. *This* time he was for the first time confronted with Silence and came away to all appearance no wiser! Perhaps only a little soothed. So it appeared at the time. But—

O Maharshi! What "Time Bomb" you stole into my being which has since, as if from beneath, been *mining* many a fond castle of the ego. Even though the outer life remains the same as ever, a plaything of the *gunas*, the ship of life finds its course changed, all unknown. Often the ego looks back at all it held dear, and exclaims:

اے روشنیِ طبع تو بر من بلا شدی

(O light of the Heart, Thou hast
become a tyrant to me!)

Yet the ship sails on. And while all the old bonds are visible in their majesty, as before, the gold fetters somehow seem to be losing their "gold". In the vicious circle of Ignorance, a seed is sown which seems to have the unique potentiality of removing each weed as it sprouts. From 'outside' you pushed me "in", though inside you are still playing hide and seek with me! Yet the endless "questions" of the intellect, the subtle cunning of the ego, seem self-dissolving: the "three dimensions" have lost their rigour; and Time, far from being the master, seems to be now your instrument in completing its work. The work of a lifetime is perhaps being wrought inside a few years: the perception of the shadow-hood of the "shadows" one pursued for long ages!

A tribute? You need no tribute from me. And what tribute can a poor candle pay to the sun? Even the salutation which has arisen from my heart is not so much to the Temple of your body but to the Divine Inhabitant revealing Himself in the Temple. The glory of the contact with THAT is that, far from limiting one to a body, it reveals and confirms Its Omnipresence through various channels and various bodies. And so, you have often greeted me not only through the body known as Ramana but equally through other bodies. I have in mind particularly one sage who entered my life barely a year after I came away with your blessing, through whom too you have blessed me with your contact and removed many a cobweb of the deluded intellect, and *pulled* me from the "circumference" to the "centre"; and another through whom too you have entered my life and given a foretaste of the awakening of the *psyche*, and a vision of a life in the Knowledge as against a life in the Ignorance, in the Great Play of the Supreme Playwright!

The *Sadguru* is One, did you not tell me when I paid you a second visit last year? ONE indeed!

Who am I to write as I have done? Sheer impertinence and vanity! May be, but I thought it would be cowardly not to bear witness, to my fellow-men, of the supreme consolation, even in the Ignorance, of the dictum "he who chooses the Divine, has been chosen by the Divine".

I know too that it cannot please you. The same ego, the same terms of Ignorance, the same phraseology of the prison-house! But I have written what I feel today. When Truth owns me, I will write in terms of knowledge.

III

I have not attempted to sketch the teachings of the Maharshi, for the simple reason that that must be left to scholars. Also, I believe the *influence* of a Sage is more important than his teachings. The teachings may fill different vessels for different men at different times with varying hues. And "teachings" can only teach in so far as the receiver opens up to them; their very interpretation changes from man to man, for each man is his own path to Truth.

Yet, two things remarkable which strike me about the Maharshi's teachings are—their simplicity and their constancy. To the great scholar and seeker, Sri Ganapati Muni, was given to receive the Maharshi's teachings 40 years ago. When the venerable Muni entreated the then young *Siddha* Ramana "All that has to be read, have I read. I have studied the whole of Vedanta, I have performed *Japa* to my heart's content, yet I have not understood what *tapas* is. Hence have I sought refuge at thy feet". Gazing at him in silence for a short time, short and sweet, the Maharshi instructed him thus:

"If one watches whence this notion 'I' springs, the mind is absorbed into that. That is *tapas*. When a *Mantra* is mentally articulated, if the attention is diverted to the source whence the *Mantra*-sound is produced within, the mind is absorbed in that. That is *Tapas.*"

And-the quintessence of the whole Path:

"In the interior of the cavity of the Heart, the One Supreme Being is ever glowing with the self-conscious emanation 'I-I'. To realise Him, enter into the Heart with one-pointed mind, by quest within, or diving deep, or control of breath, and abide with the Self of self."

Even as a dog follows the scent of his Master!

And the same teaching is given by the Maharshi till this day. TRUTH has many facets, but no "layers".

In the domain of the Maharshi's Self-knowledge most of the ordinary teachings of religion for the man in Ignorance have no place. So, when men interrogate him, his answers sometimes savour of the cryptic. Here are a few random quotations.

Q: How can I attain Self-Realization?

A: Realization is nothing to be gained afresh; it is already there . . . When the not-Self disappears, the Self alone remains. To make room, it is enough that the cramping be removed; room is not brought from elsewhere.

Q: Would it not be better if the Saints mix with others?

A: There are no "others" to mix with. The Self is the only Reality.

Q: Why do you not go about and preach the Truth to the people at large?

A: How do you know I am not doing it? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people? Preaching is simple communication of knowledge; it can be really done in silence only.

How does speech arise? There is abstract Knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought and the thought to words. So the word is the great-grandson of the original Source. If the word can produce effect, how much more powerful must be preaching through Silence!

Lecturers may entertain individuals for hours without improving them. Silence, on the other hand, is permanent and benefits the *whole* of humanity.

Q: Is a vow of silence useful?

A: The inner Silence is . . . . living without the sense of ego.

Q: Is solitude necessary for a *sannyasin*?

A: Solitude is in the mind of a man . . . A detached man is always in solitude.

Q: What is *Mouna*?

A: That State which transcends speech and thought is *Mouna*; it is meditation without mental activity.

Q: **Is re-incarnation true?**

A: **Re-incarnation exists only so long as there is ignorance. There is *really* no re-incarnation at all.**

Q: In the Theosophical Society they meditate in order to seek *Masters* to guide them.

A: The Master is within; meditation is meant to remove the ignorant idea that He is outside.

Q: Do you use occult powers to make others realize the Self?

A. The spiritual force of Self-realization is far more powerful than the use of all the occult powers.

* * * * * *

Q: What is *dhyana* or meditation?

A: *Dhyana* consists in abiding unswervingly as identical with one's pure Being . . . without harbouring the thought that one is in meditation.

Q: Of what use are the *Srutis* (ancient scriptures) to the *Jnani*?

A: The *Jnani* shines forth as That to which all the attributes enumerated by the *Srutis* refer. To him, therefore, those sacred texts are of no use whatever.

Q: Research on God has been going on from time immemorial . . . God is described as manifest and unmanifest . . . is God personal . . . . ?

A: How can the intellect which can never reach the Self be competent to ascertain . . . . ? It is like trying to measure the Sun-light at its source by the standard of the light given by a candle. The wax will melt down before the candle comes anywhere near the Sun.

Q: Fate and Free Will—which prevails?

A: The dispute as to which of the two,—fate and the human will,—is more powerful, interests only those that are without enlightenment about the true nature of the ego, from which arise the two notions; he that has transcended both is no more interested in the question.

Q: *Jnana Marga* and *Bhakti Marga*?

A: Just as one dives into a lake seeking a thing that has fallen in, so should the seeker dive into the heart resolved to find wherefrom does rise the ego-sense, restraining speech and the vital breath.

It is the Supreme Self that dwells in the hearts of one and all as pure Awareness; so, when the heart melts in love and the cave where He

shines is reached, then the Eye of Awareness opens and He is realized as the real Self.

Q: *Karma Marga*?

A: Work performed with attachment is a shackle, whereas work performed with detachment does not affect the doer. He is, even while working, in solitude. To engage in your duty is the true *Namaskar* . . . and abiding in God is the only true *Asan*.

Q: Is spirituality consistent with life as a *grihastha* (householder)—taking the case of the householder who is materially so poor that he has to devote all his time to earn his livelihood and to maintain his family?

A: The discharge of duties by such a householder, working for the maintenance of his family, quite unmindful of his own physical comforts in life should be considered as selfless service rendered to the members of the family whose needs he has to look after, due to his *prarabdha*. Such *Karma* is not an obstacle to attaining *Jnana*. Nor does *Jnana* stand in the way of discharging one's duties in life.

Sri Rajendra Prasad: Mahatma Gandhi has sent me here. Is there any message that I may take to him?

Sri Maharshi: What message is needed when heart speaks to heart? The same *shakti* which is working here is also working there!

IV

But what of the teachings? The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof.

Love, *Jnana, Mukti*; Peace, Equanimity, Grace; Virtue, Impersonality and Detachment—are just words, words, words. One comes to understand the import of these *vibhutis* as one is privileged to sit in the presence of a Master like the Maharshi.

"Man, know Thyself"—has been an ancient teaching, the burden of the *Upanishads*. The Maharshi gives a new and *living* orientation to this simple yet most mystic of spiritual teachings.

Such Flowers of humanity, which bloom from age to age, are a blessing to mankind; for they are like a light-house in a stormy sea, Messengers of the Divine! It is a privilege of mankind that such a One "lives" amongst us today, embodying and canalising Divine Grace within such easy reach of men!

My salutations to the Sage of Arunachala!

THE THRICE MARVELLOUS MASTER

SRI RAMANA

Eternity has worn a human face,
Contracted to a little human span;
Lo, the Immortal has become a man,
A self-imprisoned thing in time and space.

Upon a narrow couch you see Him sit,
Vision of tenderness and grace and calm:
Upon the finite compass of His palm
He holds the secrets of the Infinite.

Behind our loneliness He is the speech
Shedding rare Wisdom; and, beyond our guess,
Behind our speech, He is the loneliness
Sensed but in glimpses, far beyond our reach.

Thrice marvellous pure Master on the height,
Towards Whom we dumbly yearn, each one apart,
Striving to hold Thy image in the heart,
O cleave our darkness with your searching light!

The light which knows our subterfuges, knows
The glooms encircling us, the mournful ways
On which we walk. O silent Master! raise
Our footfalls unto summits of repose.

We are all tired since we are un-attuned
To the unfaltering Stillness which You are:
Our feet are bleeding and the goal is far;
Have mercy, Lord! and heal us wound by wound.

—Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.

SRI RAMANA
VEDIC RISHI OF MODERN AGE

By

Dr. Sir Rm. Alagappa Chettiar, M.A., LL.D., D.Litt.

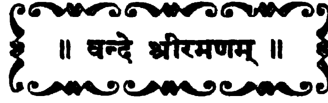
It is a common jibe among those who are steeped in the materialism of the West to speak of India as if she were a child lost in the darkness of primitive ignorance. Well, if atom bombs are the outward symbol of the enlightenment of the West, India is assuredly yet an ignorant child and proud to be ignorant. But if civilisation—as Matthew Arnold would put it—consists in *being* and not *having*, in perfection of the spirit and not the conquest of matter, India is most emphatically no ignorant child but a wise adult. The true India—not the India which has caught the contagion of the West—but the India which has escaped that infection, has always regarded God as the one reality and refused to be blinded by all the glitter of material phenomena. The true India has always looked upon the world as the training ground of the soul whose object is the realization of God.

The spirituality of India is not a myth. It is a solid fact. Spirituality has been the essence of Indian philosophy past as well as present. Not all the influence of the West has succeeded in changing the foundation of our life and giving us over to a different philosophy. If the character of the Indians had changed, how can we explain the emergence of such personalities in recent times as Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswathi and Swami Ramatirtha, Mahatma Gandhi and Ramana Maharshi? Speaking at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, Swami Vivekananda, the evangelist of Indian culture, described himself as a member of the most ancient order of monks in the world. It is an order which is most ancient and yet still alive and active. There can be no greater proof of the eternal vigour of Indian philosophy than that a *Mahatma* like Gandhi should be the foremost personality in our national life, endowing politics with the sanctities of religion, and that a *Maharshi* like Ramana should live among us as an adored saint.

Ramana Maharshi lives at the highest spiritual level that one can think of. Those who go to him expecting that he will force conviction on them by the power of his spoken word will return disappointed. His is not wisdom of speech, but of silence. Those who go to him expecting that he will produce faith by working miracles, will also return disappointed. The saint will not stoop to implant faith through miracles. There is only one way of communing with the Great Spirit, and that is by tuning our spirit to his. Just as our radio receiving sets pick up different stations by tuning to different wave lengths, so also devotees who wait on him come away having received different intimations from his soul but with the one impression of his greatness. He creates a world of his own around himself and to enter into that world is to escape from all doubt and to attain faith and, therefore, peace. I would far rather be a citizen of that little, inner world, delivered from all stress and strife, than be a citizen of the big, outer world where hope is only despair, because it knows no God.

Ramana Maharshi is in the direct line of succession of the great *rishis* of the Vedic period. To have him in our midst is our proud privilege, for he will surely keep our spirits nourished and our faith alive.





SALUTATIONS TO SRI RAMANA

अरुणाद्रिदरीवासं करुणामयविग्रहम् ।
तरुणादित्यसंकाशं रमणं गुरुमाश्रये ॥ १ ॥

1. Dweller in the cave on Arunachala Hill; Grace embodied; Splendour of the rising Sun; the Master Ramana; in Him I seek refuge!

गुरुवर रमणीयै मंजुसङ्कीर्तनाद्यैः
उषसि विगतनिद्रो वेदवादैर्द्विजानाम् ।
करुणरसमयैस्त्वं लोचनापाङ्गपातैः
भवनिगडजडानां मोचनं संविधत्स्व ॥ २ ॥

2. Great Master, awakened at dawn with charming music and sweet *vedic* chant by *brahmins*, dispense to us Release from the fetters of *samsara*, by Your side-glances full of loving grace.

करेवरकमण्डलुस्फटिकसन्निभाऽऽत्मप्रभा
प्रभावजितभास्करं विकसिताब्जनेत्रद्वयम् ।
अदृष्टचरमद्भुतं हुतवहाद्रिवासप्रियं
विशालतरफालकं किमपि धाम वन्दामहे ॥ ३ ॥

3. Holding an excellent water-goblet in hand; with body shining brighter than the Sun; with eyes blooming like a pair of lotus-flowers leading a wonderful life the like of which is not known; loving to live on the Fire-Hill; with forehead very broad; to this inestimable Glory we bow.

॥ वन्दे श्रीरमणम् ॥

ज्योतिष्टोममुखैर्मखैरपि जपैर्होमैश्च दानैस्तथा
सर्वैः कृच्छ्रकृतैस्तपोभिरथवा यच्चैवलभ्येत च ।
तत्सर्वैस्तवसन्निधानमहिमाभाग्यं निरीहैरहो !
कैश्चिद्वृक्षवरैरिहाद्य सततं संभुज्यते स्थावरैः ॥ ४ ॥

4. The glory of your Presence which cannot be gained by all the sacred rituals, invocations, gifts, austerities etc.—that excellent result is now unwittingly gained even by the trees in your garden. How wonderful!

सेवानम्रमहीन्द्रवृन्दवचनाद्यासक्तचित्तोऽसि किं
किंवाभ्यागततापसेन्द्रवचनात् किंवा समाधेर्वशात् ।
क्रन्दन्त्यत्र यतो जना अशरणाः संसारसन्तापतः
मादृक्षास्तव कस्यवार्तनिनदः कर्णातिथिः स्यादहो ! ॥ ५ ॥

5. Can Your mind be occupied with the words of the groups of royal devotees who are humble before You, or of Your very meritorious and austere guests? Or, are You withdrawn in *Samadhi* that You do not seem to hear the cries of the helpless like me who are burning in the fire of *samsara*? How strange, again?

कस्स्वागस्विषु देवदेव ! न पराक्रम्येत लोके जनः
शृङ्गेणापि निहन्ति हन्त ! ननु गौर्दण्डोद्यतं शङ्कितः ।
भक्तापत्सहनेन ते नहि भवेत्सर्वेश्वरत्वं विभो
व्यापन्नस्य ममापदुद्धरकृते कालोऽयमभ्यागतः ॥ ६ ॥

6. God of gods! who in the world will not exert himself against his enemy? Even a tame cow shakes her horns against a man who goes at her with stick in hand. Lord, Your patience at the distress of Your devotees cannot make for Your All-might. Now is the time for removing the dangers and saving me who have fallen into misfortune.

मुक्तिं प्राप्य किमीशकार्यमधुनात्यक्तातसातासुखां
त्वत्सान्निध्यमहाप्रमोदकणिकामप्याप्नुयां चेदहम् ।
अस्मादप्यधिकं किमस्ति जगति त्वत्पादसेवासुखात्
युक्तोऽयं गुरुनाथदर्शनमहामोदोऽपवर्गान्तरम् ॥ ७ ॥

7. Lord, of what use can Liberation be which is free from pleasure or pain? A moment in your sweet Presence is enough for me.

What more can one wish in the world than to serve at Your feet? Master, the supreme joy of Your Presence is better than Liberation itself.

त्रातव्योऽयमिति प्रभो मयि दयास्याच्चेद्द्रुतं पाहि मां
किंवा दुष्कृतसत्कृतादिमननेनैवं नु युक्तं तव।
कर्तुं लोकमुतापकर्तुमितरानापेक्षशक्तस्य ते
किंवा संप्रति वञ्चना बलवती कर्मानुगुण्यं त्विति ॥ ८ ॥

8. Lord, save me this minute, if You so please. Do not be weighing my merits and demerits now. You who without extraneous aids can create and resolve the worlds at Your will—if You say that my lot is according to my *karma*, it is only to deceive me.

दासे मय्यरुणाचलेश ! पृथुके सन्नाहिभिर्भीकरैः
दूतैः प्रेतपतेर्मुहुर्हि परितः संवार्यमाणे शनैः।
वात्सल्यामृतविद्रुतेन हृदयेनागच्छतः सन्निधिं
किंनाम श्रृणुयां तवामृतवचः पापौघविध्वंसकम् ॥ ९ ॥

9. O Lord Arunachala, when the fearsome messengers of Death surround and drag me, will You have pity for me, Your slave and child, come to me with love, drive away the tormentors and whisper in my ears the sin-destroying, immortal word of Five Letters?

त्वत्सान्निध्यविहीनदेशवलयो मैवास्तु मे सर्वदा
त्वत्तत्वेन कलापि मास्तु विकला लीलात्तसद्विग्रह।
त्वत्पादार्चनभक्तिलेशविधुरो वंशोऽपि मैवास्तु मे
त्वच्चिन्तारहितं च मास्तु गुरुराडायुः प्रभोभ्यर्थये ॥ १० ॥

10. O Lord, I do not want to live where You are not; nor learn *sastras* which do not speak of Your true words; nor keep company with those who are not Your devotees; nor even hold on to life in which Your thought is not constant.

आत्मविद्याभूषणं
श्री जगदीश्वरशास्त्रिविरचितम्

Atmavidyabhushanam
—Sri Jagadiswara Sastri

THE SAGE'S ACTIVITY IN INACTIVITY

By

Ella Maillart, (Switzerland).

According to my actual understanding it would be foolishly daring of me to write something about Sri Ramana himself, the mode of life of a sage being an abysmal mystery but for those who enjoy a similar state of consciousness.

> "How and to whom can be described what is experienced within by one who is desireless, whose sorrow is destroyed, and who is contented with repose in the Self?"
>
> (*Ashtavakra Gita*)

Neither can I be so bold as to add my gloss to the commentaries that have already been made on the Maharshi's "Forty Verses." Who am I to do it, would it be of any help to any one, and is it not much better to let Sri Ramana, the Teacher, comment on them himself, if and when he thinks it could be of any use?

As for descriptions of the life at the Ashram of Tiruvannamalai, I don't think it is within my power to depict the subtle atmosphere which renders the place unique in its setting of dry and hard beauty.

Nevertheless, I would like a small token of homage to reach the feet of Sri Ramana from me as a pledge of my gratefulness. And he will perhaps be indulgent enough to accept the following lines about a thought that occurred to me.

* * * *

Sooner or later, Westerners who come to know the Maharshi feel constrained to say how puzzled they are by the inactivity of the Sage. "Why doesn't he help the world? Preach? Travel? Condemn this? Advise that? Humanity is committing suicide: surely it is urgent to do something about it?" We come from a continent where six months of beastly cold weather might partly explain that particular genius which forces us to be physically active, to be on the move all the time, to shape things with our hands, our will altering the aspects as well as the dimensions of the earth.

The Maharshi has already met such reiterated remarks with many a wise or witty answer. Slowly the Westerner might have learned a few things,—among them the truth that thought precedes action. One must first of all learn to think properly and having done so one can hope for right action to follow.

Even when we go to the East in search of its Wisdom we remain at the level of understanding of the hurried visitor who, having identified himself with his body, is convinced that one has to be visibly active. It is perhaps unnecessary to explain to him that inactivity is the basis of its corollary, activity; that the useful wheel could not exist or work without a motionless centre; it is unnecessary to comment upon the verse of the *Bhagavat Gita* about seeing activity in inactivity and inactivity in activity, which proves that one can eventually be established beyond such a pair of opposites.

But with reference to the standpoint of the common man I would like to make a remark that might interest a few of my friends at home. That remark is borne out by what I felt strongly at Tiruvannamalai.

Even supposing that such great ones as the Maharshi could be really inactive, that they simply sat among us but were otherwise lost to our world—neither meditating, praying, nor receiving the respects of their devotees,—even were such an impossible case possible—I say their activity is tremendous; they are the salt of the earth, their influence spreads out far away and is unconsciously felt even by workers hardly ever giving a thought to such sages. Something intangible emanates from these realised men; rather, what they stand for permeates the land they inhabit. *Odeur de saintete* . . . they sanctify the place through their presence. A kind of equilibrium is brought into being in the mind of the people. Whatever happens—good or bad—in the daily life of these men, everything seems to be in order because the Sage is there.

The Westerner may say that such a faith is possible only among Indian peasants. No, I think that in most cases the position assigned to a sage has little to do with faith. Such a Master has lived for ten, twenty, forty years on the same spot. Those who come to know of him slowly become sure that he is totally "other" than they; he has attained a certitude which makes him free from restlessness, free from fear, desire and doubt,—he can do things none of them can do.

because he is egoless. Also, something else had taken place which was more important from the point of view of the layman's understanding. One day the saintly recluse had been questioned about truth, about the aims of life, or about the nature of ultimate Reality. And, though he had studied or read nothing about such subjects, his answers corroborated the teachings of the sacred books: he could even explain obscure passages of these books. His words created a deep, lasting emotion; and what was more important from the point of view of the earnest enquirer, was the fact that he got a firm conviction about the object of his enquiry, a conviction he never had from the study of scriptures. Here was the man, declared one by one the enquiring savants, who was living what he described. He spoke with authority. It does not mean that he was fully understood. But in those who had lived near him grew the conviction that here was a man who knew what he was talking about, who knew the "why and how" of what had been harassing them. They stopped worrying continually about problems they were never meant to solve. They resumed their daily tasks and they felt for the first time at peace: there was a living one who knew the ultimate answers. He had proved that, so far, things had to be as they were. As for the future, the only way out was to start loving one's neighbour as oneself. Because he had shown how in Truth we are all the same Self. And the nature of Self is Love. The ultimate object of quest is this Self of Love. So then, to make the object of quest, namely, the Self, synchronize with the highest ideal of moral conduct, namely, Love,—thereby making that Love the Love without the "otherness"—and to inculcate, through one's own life and realisation, that selfless Love for the Self Universal, is a mighty achievement, which none perhaps but Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha achieved in the annals of history.

Is not this the most important action a man can accomplish: to be the link between what we call the concrete world and the Unmanifest, that obviously contains and regulates all creation,—to be the living symbol of that knowledge without which the humanity of today is but a pitiful joke—to implant a lasting peace in the centre of every man's heart in spite of all the surface difficulties, whatever they be? Is not this, I ask, the highest achievement in life?

What do we see in the West of today? Every moment adding to the despair of men lost in fruitless researches. Hopelessness gaining

ground, each one being obliged to seek a solution along alleys most of which become blind. I could write many more lines on the burden that life has become to most people. We have no "liberated men" living among us to tell us what it is all about, what to cling to, and how to cling to it in order to come out of our misery.

I want to make a kind of parallel, though I do not know if it is quite right. (I have no way of making sure of it myself, since I am in what I take to be the highest village of Switzerland, far from libraries and study circles.) In China, in the days of its living tradition, the emperor was the tangible link that connected Heaven and Earth. If the emperor had sufficient knowledge, like the real sage, all was well: by his mere Presence at the Temple of Heaven all would be kept in order within the four corners of the empire. Every one knew that there was one who *knew*, the Son of Heaven was maintaining the connection with the celestial kingdom, everything was kept rightly balanced. (No doubt, a Pope, a Dalai Lama, a Pharaoh should be a similar link.)

"Tao never does;
Yet through it all things are done.
If the barons and kings would but possess themselves of it,
The ten thousand creatures would at once be transformed."

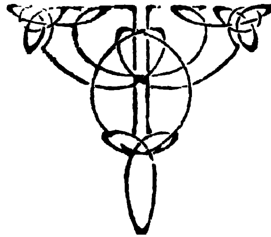
"Tao is eternal, but has no fame (name) . . . . .
If kings and barons would but possess themselves of it,
The ten thousand creatures would flock to do them homage;
Heaven-and-earth would conspire
To send Sweet Dew.[1]"[2]

At the pivotal point between heaven and earth the Chinese emperor was mainly dealing with forces of nature whereas the sage of the Vedanta symbolises a link between the unknowable Ultimate and man. But, before I finish, I would like to point out that in the *Tao Te Ching* (one of the few books I happen to have with me with the *Ashtavakra Gita* and the *Gospels*) when describing a sage, Lao Tzu expresses nearly the same thing I heard the Maharshi explain to me.

[1] "Sweet Dew tastes like barley-sugar or honey; it falls only when a kingdom is at complete peace." Lun Heng, XIX. 2.

[2] Ch. XXXII—*Extracts from the "Tao Te Ching"*. Transl. by A. Waley. Allen & Unwin. London, 1934.

"For truly 'Being and Not-being grow out of one another;
Difficult and easy complete one another;
Long and short test one another;
High and low determine one another;
The sounds of instruments and voice give harmony to one another;
Front and back give sequence to one another'.
Therefore the Sage relies on actionless activity,
Carries on wordless teaching,
But the myriad creatures are worked upon by him;
he does not disown them."[3]



[3] Ch. II—*Ibid.*

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA
THE SAGE OF PEACE, PURITY AND LOVE

By

Rajaseva Praveena, T. M. Krishnaswami Aiyar, B.A., B.L.,
(Retired Chief Justice, Travancore State.)

Shanti or Peace is the home of God. God there is restful, creative, enjoyable and resplendent. There He is in the fullness of His Being. He is the golden vessel that holds the ambrosia of eternal joy. The joy is the joy of being and becoming and the travail of illusion and irritation is not there. Lord Sri Krishna and Sri Nataraja are the divine symbols or *mudras* of the eternal peace within, amidst the intense physical movements of the body and the play of world conflicts. Sri Padmanabha and Sri Dakshinamoorti represent the forms of that awareful sleep and the sweet meditative introspection which the experience of the eternal joy may take. The varied *avatars* of Siva and Vishnu, by whatever name you may call the Divinity, are but the moulds into which the eternal joy is cast for expression. For, the expression of joy is manifold and multitudinous. The true joy of your being can be sensed only in the stillness of the mind and in suspension of desires and self-consciousness, i.e. the consciousness of one's own self as separated from the cosmos. Herein lies the secret of the contemplative enjoyment of god-appropriation.

Years ago by the side of the ravine in the Hill of Light, i. e., Arunachala, in an unostentatious habitation of thatch and stone, in the neighbourhood of a babbling brook and in the companionship of squirrels, monkeys and other friends of the thicket, I first saw the slim figure of a Yogi who seemed to be the flame of a candle. The candle has now grown into Sri Ramanashram. The flame is still there as it was. The paradox is that the flame feeds the candle and not the candle the flame. For the realised Saint the whole world is one and only one. That one is the Lord, which unifies. The past, present and future are but one. The unknowable beginning is that one, so sang the great Siva Vakyar,

"ஒன்றும் ஒன்றும் ஒன்றுமே
உலகனைத்தும் ஒன்றுமே
அன்றும் இன்றும் ஒன்றுமே
அனாதியானது ஒன்றுமே
கன்றல் நின்ற செம்பொனை
களிம்பறுத்து நாட்டினால்
அன்று தெய்வம் உம்முளே
அறிந்ததே சிவாயமே."

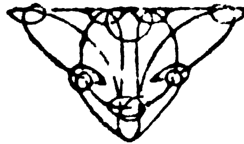
The atmosphere of Ramanashram is a very fitting place for students of religious research to realise this eternal Truth. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Rishi is a remarkable personality. He has now become an expanding atmosphere. By an urge from within coming from the unknowable depths of the past, as a young boy, meditation possessed him. The world now runs after him. There are friends who have remarked to me, that, having paid a visit to Ramanashram, they were overtaken by a sense of frustration. The Bhagavan is mostly silent, everybody else is silent. There is not even the passing interest of a quarrel round about. The Ashram cannot interest those who have not learnt to seek the treasures of man's inner consciousness, nor to catch the message of the silence. For him who yearns to look without, Sri Bhagavan will show the world within.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Rishi has frequently told the seekers after truth who solicit his guidance to examine and learn the truth about the "I" by enquiring "Who am I?" If one learns the truth about oneself, as every being is the "I" of itself, one knows oneself as well as the world. The simplicity of this expression of the universal problem of man may look disappointing, but the disappointment arises from the fact that God and the religious search are ordinarily camouflaged by a complex facade of puzzles and conflicts, gradations and hierarchies, which can subsist only on the exploitation of ignorance. Services, physical, intellectual or religious, to be useful to him that serves and to him that is served, must be cast in a selfless spirit. It must mean the illumination of the spirit and its upheaval. It ought not to be the forging of institutions intended to perpetuate and glorify ignorance. Institutions intended to help people to rise "on the stepping stones of their dead selves" into the liberty divine, have been fastened into prison walls of exploitation. The liberty that is to be achieved and enjoyed in the

name of the true spirit of service and love has become encrusted into habitations of favoured treatment and special privileges.

The liberty to do and die has been transformed in the modern world into a right to remain idle and exploit. The great battle fought against the hatreds of Hitlerian machinery has been won at a great cost of valued life and treasure. The message of peace and love, of meditation and realisation, and of service and universalism has a great value in setting humanity on a higher plane. The wiping out of humanity is but a small loss, but the survival of the spirit of vengeance augurs ill for the future world.

Ramanashram is an oasis in the desert of the modern world. It is the life-spring of love and life. May its waters take flood and submerge the world! May its mighty waves dash against the crude fortresses of racial arrogance and exclusiveness! May the depths of the spirit of forgiveness submerge the tall edifices of the courts of revenge! May the meditation of the Great ones reshape a world of peace, love and brotherhood! One word more. My sincere *pranamams* and obeisance to the flame of Sri Ramanashram!



BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

THE LIGHT OF LIGHTS

By

Dewan Bahadur **K. S. Ramaswami Sastri,** B.A., B.L.

(Retired Chief Justice, Pudukottah State)

. . . . We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live;
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed,
To the poor, loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth,—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element.

—*S. T. Coleridge.*

स्मरणात् अरुणाचलम्—*Smaranat Arunachalam*—is a famous saying and tells us that the mere memory of Arunachala can bring Salvation. **स्मरणात् रमण महर्षिः**—*Smaranat Ramana Maharshih*—may well be added as a true supplementary saying. I have gone to him often during these forty years and more. I do not know why. Very probably I have done so because of some *karmic* bond or *vasana,* or because of some elective affinity. Can any of us find any satisfying reason for the deepest things of life—say, for instance, birth or death or spiritual Knowledge or experience of Blessedness or Holiness? **भावस्थिराणि जननान्तर सौहृदानि,**—" the companionships of previous births rooted in the depths of Unconsciousness" says the supreme poet of India, Kalidasa. I have seen the Maharshi when he was in a small cave up the hill-side, shunning human society and wrapt in uncanny and unbroken silence. I have seen him when he came a little down the hill-side and dwelt on its lower stretches. A room with a verandah all round took the place of the narrow diminutive cave. Whenever I saw him, during these later days, I used to ply him with

questions about the soul and he used to smile and give brief, bright, blessed replies dispelling doubt. I have seen him since in a spacious room amidst a handsome pile of buildings which are yet growing in number and in size. A shrine was built in memory of his holy Mother who has passed into the Beyond and become one with God. His present abode is at the foot of the Hill. His coming down thus from the hill-side to the hill-base is symbolical of the new urge, the urge to commune with God and also to build the Kingdom of God on the earth. I found him stretched at his ease on a couch, during the sweltering heat of the day. A revolving book-shelf was near his hand, at his foot a stand of incense sticks sent wreathed smoke-rings of subtle perfume into the moveless air. A little beyond sat disciples and admirers in a meditative pose, in absolute calm and quietness. Ever and anon the slightest of slight breezes came stealing into the room and made the incense-smoke whirl and spread, while the world-intoxicated mind became subdued, calm and purified in the holy atmosphere of the Sage. Not one word was uttered by any one. But there was an eloquent silence all about us.

"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone." —(*Keats*)

Was it the stately presence of the silent Hill seen through the window that spoke to our souls with a solemn silent stillness? Was it the holy mood of the Master in his introverted introspection? Was it the still small voice of every one there wrapt into a kindred mood by a force subtle and unseen, but powerful and felt within? We sat there, and time rolled on while we were oblivious of its course. Each felt a sense of inner release and was as happy as a bird

"sailing with supreme dominion
Through the azure deep of air."

The hush of the evening fell upon us. The Master rose and passed into the open *pandal* close by and sat on a couch in a place whence we could see the Hill flood-lighted by the setting sun. The disciples and admirers also moved thither and sat in a semi-circle in front of the Sage. Then began their chant of the daily evensong glorifying the Master and his message. The hymn swelled forth again and again in ever-new cadences, all the persons present taking up the chorus:

வாழ்க வாழ்க வாழ்க வாழ்க ரமணன் பாதம் வாழ்கவே !
வாழ்க வாழ்க வாழ்க வாழ்க வாழ்க என்றும் வாழ்கவே !

May Sri Ramana's holy Feet live and flourish,
And bless all for ever and for ever!

Then the hymn came to a solemn close, and the fullmoon rose in the sapphire sky. That deep silence which had preceded the soaring song fell on us once more. The inner Fullmoon of Divine Rapture rose in the sky of the hearts of all. Then came to my mind the great passage in Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* about Christ: "Indeed, that is the charm about Christ; when all is said, He is just like a work of art. He does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into his presence one becomes something. And everybody is predestined to his presence." I felt that I was predestined to the Sage's presence and went into the stillness of the night, moving away from him physically but feeling drawn nearer to him in spirit like a streamer borne against the wind, to use Kalidasa's famous simile, **चीनांशुकमिव केतोः प्रतिवातं नीयमानस्य ।**

I do not propose to say much in this essay about Maharshi's life or discuss his teachings in detail; first, because such a task would make this essay swell to the size of a volume (which cannot and will not be permitted in a Jubilee Symposium) and secondly, because the contributions from my friends and fellow-devotees, which are going to adorn this volume, will deal with other aspects of the Sage's life.

He was born in the village of Tiruchuzhi in the Madura District and bore the name Venkataraman. His family shifted from the village to Dindigul and then migrated to Madura. He was put to school like others; but just as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa felt the urge to worship the Mother, and Rabindranath Tagore felt the urge to sing in praise of Beauty, and left the school to win the grace of the idols of their hearts, Sri Ramana felt the urge to go to and dwell in Arunachala. The call of his innermost Self became clear, clamant and unsubduable. The Self of All beckoned to him to come out of his petty ego. Sri Ramana read the lives of the sixty-three Tamil Saints (*Nayanars*), and felt like them that he should come out of worldliness and attain supreme Saintliness. He realised the perishable nature of the body and the eternal being of the Self, as a natural consequence of the "death experience" he had some six weeks before he left Madura. One day

when he was asked by his brother to take five rupees to be paid as a schoolfee, he took only three and left an unsigned note saying that he was going in search of his Father and that no search should be made to trace him out. He eventually reached Arunachala (Tiruvannamalai). He had his head shaven clean, put on a piece of cloth as *koupeenam* and merged into absolute silence and meditation. He lived in unbroken communion with the Self of All and became a *Sthita-Prajna* (the man of steadfast Wisdom), to use the language of the Bhagavad Gita. He thus reached the quintessence of Knowledge by an immediacy of experience. It was some years later that he found confirmation of it in the holy books testifying to similar experiences. Later yet he wrote a few books in Tamil verse, translated one or two holy books in Sanskrit and even composed a few verses in that language. His teachings were put in classical form in Sanskrit by Kavya Kantha Ganapati Sastri (himself a great seer and scholar). The literature written by and about the Sage has now swelled into mighty proportions.

The Maharshi's gospel has always been one of Self-realisation. All are eligible for the path of *Jnana* which leads to Self-realisation. Hence the Maharshi's religion is the most universal of all faiths. Change your mentality, why change the environment and run into a forest? You must get beyond the fierce, feverish love of selfish action and the fierce, feverish love of selfish asceticism. Do not worry yourself about the fate of the universe. Attain self-control, self-knowledge and self-reverence. The Self or Atman is the screen on which the variegated cinema-show of life is projected for ever and for ever. The Self is beyond the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, and is the Witness of them all. We must merge into *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi* again and again until we attain *Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, in which one transcends the mind and is in a state of unawareness of the body and the world, being immersed in infinite, eternal, supreme *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. In *sushupti* (deep sleep) the mind is enfolded in nescience (*ajnana*); in *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi* the mind is merged in the Self but re-emerges again and again; in *Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi* the mind becomes one with the Self for ever, like a river that has emptied itself into the ocean and has no longer the name and form it had before, and can never have the same again. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says:—

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽस्तंगच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।
तथा विद्वान्नामरूपाद्विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥

"Just as rivers flowing onwards enter the ocean, giving up their names and forms, even so the man of Divine Realisation freed from name and form merges into the Supreme Divine Being."

Bhagavan Sri Ramana has thus taught only the supreme gospel of the *Jnanakanda*, ज्ञानकाण्ड, of the Vedas, namely, the stepping out of the petty ego, identified by itself with the mind, into Itself as It always is, namely, the Infinite, Supreme, External Peace and Happiness. He asks us to examine by analysis the phenomenon of sleep, which is a daily death, and the phenomenon of death which is but a prolonged sleep. He says that these states are like the emptying of a river into an ocean, and once again the water is drawn up as vapour and converted into a river. This is because the *sukshma sarira*, सूक्ष्म शरीर (subtle body), is there. If you let a bucket into a well, it disappears from view but it can be drawn up again and again. A tree may have its branches and even its stem cut down, but so long as the roots are intact, the stem and the branches, the leaves, flowers and fruits will reappear. The seed of *vasanas* due to *karmas* in innumerable births is there. No doubt, the individual soul is like a spark from the infinite Flame of the Absolute. But it is in a state of identification with the not-Self due to *ajnana*. Sri Sankaracharya calls this superimposition of the not-Self over the Self as *adhyasa*, अध्यास. This *adhyasa* is in full power in the waking state, जाग्रत्. It is lightened by half in dream. It drops off in deep sleep. But even there the subtle *ajnana* persists as *karana sarira*, कारण शरीर (casual body). It is only when we rise above and beyond the three bodies and the five sheaths of the soul, that we can realise the Infinite Splendour of the Noumenal Absolute. It may be experienced here and now, अत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते. It may be called the *Turiya*, तुरीय (the fourth State). Sri Maharshi describes it by an even more expressive phrase, namely, *Jagrat-Sushupti*, जाग्रत्सुषुप्ति.

The Maharshi points out further that even after the Supreme Realisation in such *Jagrat-Sushupti*, the *prarabdha karma* (the *karma* which has given us our body thereby involving us in the phenomenal existence and which, from this relative viewpoint, continues to function like an arrow which has been discharged from a bow and cannot be recalled,) will continue to operate, for all outward purposes, until death. Therefore, the *Jnani* would seem to act like the common man. But there is a fundamental difference; the *ajnani* does not experience his true

being separate from the not-Self, the body. But the *Jnani* is ever aware of his true nature as the Self Absolute, and his *pancha kosas* are like the burnt up rope, which has only the rope's form but cannot be used to tie up anything. We may call the final dissolution of the ego in the Infinite as *Nirvana* or by any other name. This State is not something which is to be reached or won some time later on. You are that Infinite, Immortal, Eternal, Blissful Self even now. Therefore, there is no such thing as Realisation after death; death affects only the *pancha kosas* with which the *Jnani* never identifies his being. What prevents the *ajnani* from realising his true being are his *vasanas* or tendencies of the mind, which create the *sariratraya* and the *pancha-kosas.* Only through *Atmanishtha*, the fixity of the mind in the Self Absolute, will he be able to wipe out the *vasanas.* The mind must get dissolved in the pure Consciousness of the Self, which is a circle whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. In that state of Absolute Being there is neither the subject nor the object.

The Maharshi tackles the question of *Siddhis* in his own unique way. He declares that *Atma-Siddhi* is the highest *Siddhi.* Since the Atman or Self is Absolute Being-Consciousness-Bliss, there can be no such thing as an exhibition of *Siddhi*; for the *Jnani* there are no "others" for whose sake *Siddhis* are to be exhibited, and there is no particular time at which a *Siddhi* is to become manifest. *Atma-Siddhi* is eternal *Siddhi.* The so-called *Siddhis* are merely ephemeral manifestations which are apt to deflect the true aspirant from the right path. The *Mukta Purusha* has nothing to do with them.

I know that very often this daring spiritual quest and adventure is criticised and denounced as a presumptuous, blasphemous affirmation of identity of Soul and God and as a philosophy of solipsism negating the obvious reality of the world. It is abused also as quietism, passivism etc. But it is not really a negation, it is a sublimation; it is no solipsism and blasphemy, but the declaration of the oneness of ultimate Reality. The world, soul and God are not three independent, mutually exclusive realities, but are the one Brahman without a second. The three are sublimated into a Unity including and transcending them. The Maharshi says:

> The Self is God. 'I AM' is God, If God be apart from the Self, He must be a Selfless God, which is absurd. All that is required

> **to realise the Self is to BE STILL. What can be easier than that? Hence *Atma Vidya* is the easiest to attain.**
> (***Maharshi's Gospel, Book I.***)

To a man like the Maharshi who must have completed the *Mukti-sadhanas* in previous births and who felt the urge as an irresistible inner mandate early in life, and completed the entire gamut of the *sadhanas* in the twinkling of an eye, such a realisation seemed and was easy. But one who seeks to tread this path, while as yet his mind is not free from *vasanas*, must go through some rigorous *sadhana* to attain the State of Supreme Peace and Bliss, which Bhagavan Sri Ramana realised spontaneously in his seventeenth year.

Thus, the Maharshi's Gospel of Self-enquiry (*Atma-vichara*) is the Upanishadic gospel; it is the gospel of Vasishtha, of Gaudapada and Sankara. But until it is practised in full, it remains merely as an intellectual analysis. Similarly, the mere uttering of the *Mahavakyas, Soham*, सोऽहम्, *Brahmaivaham*, ब्रह्मैवाहम्, *Aham Brahmasmi*, अहं ब्रह्मास्मि, etc. is of but little use. Regarding true Self-enquiry, the Maharshi says:

> ***Atma-vichara*** **is more than the repetition of any *mantra*. If the enquiry, "*Who am I?*" were a mere mental questioning it would not be of much value. The very purpose of Self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its Source. It is not, therefore, a case of one "I" searching for another "I". Much less is Self enquiry an empty formula, for it involves an intense activity of the entire mind to keep it steadily poised in the pure Awareness of the Self. *Self-enquiry is the one infallible means, the only direct one, to realise the unconditioned, absolute Being that you really are.***
> (***Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.***)

The Maharshi points out that *Atma-vichara* is the supreme *sadhan* (means) for the supreme *anubhava* (Realisation), because it sublimates and merges the mind or ego in the Self. He says:

> **Every kind of *sadhana*, except that of *Atma-vichara*, presupposes the retention of the mind as the instrument for carrying on the *sadhana*, and without the mind it cannot be practised. The ego may take different and subtler forms at the different stages of one's practice but is itself never destroyed. . . . The attempt to destroy the ego or the mind through *sadhanas* other than *Atma-vichara* is just like the thief turning out a paliceman in order to catch the thief, that is, himself. *Atma-vichara* alone can reveal the truth that neither the ego nor the mind really**

> **exists and enables one to realise the pure, undifferentiated Being of the Self or Absolute. Having realised the Self, nothing remains to be known, because it is perfect Bliss; it is the All.**
>
> (***Maharshi's Gospel, Book II***)

The Gita says यद् ज्ञात्वा नेहभूयोऽन्यद् ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥ (Ch. VII, 2) *i. e.* "Knowing which there is nothing more that remains to be known." सुखेन ब्रह्मसंस्पर्शमत्यन्तं सुखमश्नुते ॥ (Ch. VI, 28) that is, "With ease he (the *Jnani*) enjoys the infinite Bliss of contact with the Brahman."

It is clear that the Maharshi's method of trans-psychological analysis depends on the internal experience and is its own proof (*pramana*), and does not stand in need of any external proof. If we have the intellectual acumen and purity of heart to investigate and discover that the root-cause of our misery is the ego, and then with courage and *vairagya* eradicate it, the pure Bliss that is inherent to our nature reveals itself spontaneously. Says the Maharshi:

> The cause of your misery is not in the life without; it is in you as ego. You impose limitations on yourself and then make a vain struggle to transcend them. *All unhappiness is due to the ego*; with it come all your troubles. *What does it avail you to attribute to the happenings in life the cause of misery which is really within you?* What happiness can you get from things extraneous to yourself? When you get it how long will it last? . . . . *To be the Self that you really are, is the only means to realise the Bliss that is ever yours.*
>
> (***Maharshi's Gospel, Book II***)

The doubt may arise if one should not first decide about the reality of the world, which we are asked to ignore, before embarking on the quest for the abstract Self. When the Maharshi was asked whether the world is real or not, he gave a clear and emphatic answer:

> **Why worry yourself about the world and what happens to it after Self-realisation? First realise the Self, what does it matter if the world is perceived or not? It is quite immaterial to the *Jnani* or *ajnani*, if he perceives the world or not. It is seen by both, but their view-points differ. . . . . Seeing the world, the Jnani sees the Self, which is the Substratum of all that is seen; the *ajnani*, whether he sees the world or not, is ignorant of his true Being, the Self.**
>
> (***Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.***)

In the language of the Gita:

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

"Where it is darkness to all living beings, there the one with the senses and the mind controlled is awake; wherein the living beings are awake, that as darkness sees the austere one."

Using the simile of the cinema-show, the Maharshi says:

With the pictures the Self is in its manifest form; without the pictures, it remains in the unmanifest form. To the *Jnani* it is quite immaterial if the Self is in the one form or the other.

(*Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.*)

I wish to pursue this topic of the "unreality" of the world a little further. There is a famous stanza which says **दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद् ब्रह्ममयं जगत्**, making your vision the vision of *Jnana*, see the world as totally Brahman. The famous *rajju-sarpa* (rope-snake) *nyaya* indicates the truth that when the rope is seen the snake is not seen; and while the snake is seen the rope is not seen. The equally famous dream-analogy shows that the dream is true till it is stultified by the waking reality. Of course, the world is experienced by others while we dream, and the dream-reality is purely personal and is not real for others. But the fact remains that the three states of *jagrat*, *swapna* and *susupti* stultify one another, while consciousness is common to them all. In the language of *Panchadasi*, **नोदेति नास्तमेत्येका संविदेषा स्वयंप्रभा**, this Consciousness has no rising nor setting, but is self-luminous for ever. The Maharshi points out that in deep sleep we are conscious of ourselves but not of the world, and say, on waking, that we slept happily and knew nothing and we do not need the testimony of others to prove our existence; but we have to call in the aid of their testimony in order to be assured of the existence of the world which was non-existent to us in deep sleep. All that they can tell us is that they were then awake and that the world was then real to them. Thus the world has only a relative phenomenal reality, **व्यावहारिक सत्ता**. The Maharshi says:

That alone is Real which exists by itself, which reveals itself by itself and which is eternal and unchanging" पारमार्थिक सत्ता.

(*Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.*)

He then takes us to a lofty plane of thought and points out that the world is never seen except with the aid of the mind, that in sleep there is neither the mind nor the world and that, therefore, the world is but a co-efficient of the mind. He concludes with a grand ratiocination and logical deduction:

> **Consciousness is always Self-consciousness. If you are conscious of anything, you are essentially conscious of yourself. Unself conscious existence is a contradiction in terms. It is no existence at all. It is merely attributed existence, whereas true Existence, the *Sat*, is not an attribute, it is the Substance itself. It is the *Vastu*, वस्तु. Reality is, therefore, known as *Sat-Chit*, Being-Consciousness, and never merely the one to the exclusion of the other. The world neither exists by itself, nor is it conscious of its existence. How can you say that such a world is real? And what is the nature of the world? It is perpetual change, a continuous, interminable flux. A dependent, unself-conscious, ever-changing world cannot be real."**
>
> ***(Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.)***

This sublime metaphysics is in accord with the latest science and the ultra modern concepts of physics. Mr. Balfour, the Philosopher-politiciation-diplomat, said once wittily that matter has not only been explained by modern science but has been explained away. The atom has been smashed. Electrons, protons, neutrons and positrons have come. Even they are regarded as mere energy. Einstein's theory of relativity has brought modern Western science a step nearer Indian metaphysics in its highest aspect. Space-time has become a unit of reference and is a mental concept. On pages 40 to 42 of ***Maharshi's Gospel, Book II***, we find an acute analysis of the latest ideology of the most modern science. Bertrand Russell says that science knows nothing about the ultimate constituent of the atom, but knows only that it is a region of emanation or radiation of energy and that, as such radiation is continuous, the electron of one moment can never be identified with the electron of the next moment. He says, "the last vestiges of the old solid atom have melted away; matter has become as ghostly as anything in a spiritualist *seance*." Dr. Eddington says, "The frank realisation that physica science is concerned with the world of shadows is one of the most significant advances. ... In the world of physics we watch a shadow-graph performance of the drama of familiar life." Sir James Jeans says in ***The New Background of Science***, "We find that space means nothing apart

from our perception of objects, and time means nothing apart from our experience of events. Space begins to appear merely *as a fiction created by our minds*, an illegitimate extension to Nature of a subjective concept which helps us to understand and describe the arrangements of objects as seen by us; while time appears as *a second fiction* serving a similar purpose for the arrangement of events which happen to us."

Equally important and remarkable is the Maharshi's teaching that while we have the body-consciousness, the locus of God or Self which he calls the Heart, that is, the Seat of Consciousness, is "in the chest two digits to the right from the median". He teaches that "since during the bodiless experience of the Heart as pure Consciousness, the Sage is not at all aware of the body, that absolute experience is localized by him within the limits of the physical body by a sort of feeling recollection made while he is with body-awareness." He says further that meditation at the point between the eye-brows leads to the ultimate and perfect Realisation which transcend subject-object relation and that when that is achieved it does not matter where the spiritual experience is felt: (*vide, Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.*) He points out further that if one practises concentration between the eye-brows, one must do the *japa* of God's Name or of a divine *mantra*. In the case of *Atma-vichara,* no such ancillary practice is necessary, and one reaches direct the Heart, which is the Self: (*vide, Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.*)

Thus the Maharshi's Spiritual technique is of a universal character, and his philosophy is a philosophy for all. He says that the Sanskrit word, *Aham,* "I", is very suggestive and that the two letters of the word अ and ह are the first and last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and that this fact shows that the "I" comprises all. Therefore, if we analyse the concept of "I-ness" or "I am," अहंवृत्ति, we will reach the *Aham,* because this *Ahamvritti* or "I am"-ness is intertwined with all the mental concepts or modes, and can also subsist by itself. If the *aham-vritti* is traced to its Source, it will end in the Self. The *aham-vritti* was referred to by the Western Philosopher, Descartes, who said '*Cogito ergo sum*' (I think, therefore I am). The *aham-vritti* is the irreducible datum of our experience. The Maharshi says:

> The ego functions as the knot between the Self, which is pure Consciousness, and the physical body, which is inert and insentient. The ego is, therefore, called the *Chit-jada granthi.* In your investigation into the Source of *aham-vritti*, you take the

essential *Chit* aspect of the ego; and for this reason the enquiry must lead to the realisation of the pure Consciousness of the Self. .... The undifferentiated Consciousness of pure Being is the Heart, *Hridayam*, which you really are, as signified by the word itself (*Hrit* + *Ayam*: Heart am I). From the Heart arises the 'I-am'-ness as the primary datum of one's experience. By itself it is *suddha-sattva* (that is, uncontaminated by *rajas* and *tamas*). It is in this *suddha-sattva rupa* that 'I' appears to subsist in the *Jnani*. .... The *Jnani's lakshya* is the Heart itself, because he is one and identical with that undifferentiated pure Consciousness referred to by the Upanishads as *Prajnana*. The *ajnani* sees only the mind which is a mere reflection of the Light of pure Consciousness arising from the Heart. Of the Heart itself he is ignorant. Why? Because, his mind is extroverted and has never sought its Source.

(*Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.*)

Such is the bold and sublime inner adventure taught by the Maharshi. That way lies the pilgrim's inward progress towards the Eternal, Infinite, Supreme, Divine Light. He says:

Self-enquiry is really possible only through intense introversion of the mind. What is finally realised as a result of such enquiry into the Source of *aham-vritti* is verily the Heart *as the undifferentiated Light of Pure Consciousness*, into which the reflected light of the mind is completely absorbed. . For the *ajnani* the standard of Reality is the waking state, whereas for the *Jnani* the standard of Reality is Reality itself.

(*Maharshi's Gospel, Book II.*)

The Maharshi thus teaches the ancient *Brahma Vidya* or Cosmic Consciousness, with a new emphasis on the surest and subtlest of all the Spiritual technique, namely, the technique of *Atma-vichara.*

We see in the Maharshi, as in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the meeting point and synthesis of *Adwaita, Vishishtadwaita* and *Dwaita,— Dwaita* ripening into *Vishishtadwaita* and *Vishishtadwaita* ripening into *Adwaita*. A famous and well-known Sanscrit verse says:

देहबुद्ध्या तु दासोऽहं जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः ।
आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहं इति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

What is called changefulness by Ramanuja is called illusion by Sankara. The difference is only verbal. Both lead to the same goal. The Maharshi gives us another precious idea, namely, that there may be

degrees of the *experience* of the Reality due to the degrees of freedom from thoughts, but there are no degrees of the Reality as such. The so-called differences between *Dwaita, Visishtadwaita* and *Adwaita* are due only to the degrees of the experience of Reality. Similarly, God is Nameless and Formless, and yet He aids us when we seek His aid in Names and Forms.

I have thus far discussed the Maharshi's supreme gospel in its main aspects. It will not be possible to go in this essay into a detailed consideration of his works, which are not voluminous but are very profound in their significance. The *magnum opus* is *Ulladu Narpadu*, which too contains only forty verses in Tamil. Equally important is *Upadesa Saram* which is still smaller and contains only thirty couplets and is written by the Sage in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Sanscrit. Below are given a few selected verses from the great Sage's marvellous compositions which will live for ever and for ever.

உதித்த விடத்தி லொடுங்கி யிருத்த
லதுகன்மம் பத்தியு முந்தீபற
வதுயோக ஞானமு முந்தீபற.

To subside and BE absorbed into the Source is verily *Karma, Bhakti, Yoga,* and *Jnana*:

தானா யிருத்தலே தன்னை யறிதலாந்
தானிரண் டற்றதா லுந்தீபற
தன்மய நிட்டையீ துந்தீபற.

To BE the Self is to Know the Self, because there are not two selves. This Being is तन्मयनिष्ठा or 'Being That'.

---Upadesa Saram

தன்னைத்தான் காண றலைவன் றனைக்காண
லென்னுமந் நூலுண்மை யென்னையெனின் — றன்னைத்தான்
காணுவதெவ்வா றொன்றாற் காணவொண்ணா தேற்றலைவற்
காணலெவ னூணாதல் காண்.

'See the Self'; 'See the Lord', say the Scriptures. What do they convey? It is this. Who is to *see* the Self? Sight is impossible, because the Self is One. How then to *see* the Lord? To get consumed as food is to *See*.

நானென மனமுண் ணடியுள நண்ணலே,
நானு மலன்றலை நானமுற — நானுனைக்
தோன்றுமொன்று தானாகத் தோன்றிலுநா னன்றுபொருள்
பூன்றமது தானும் பொருள்.

"Who am I" When the mind thus enquiring within reaches the Heart, the ego falls frustrated, and there reveals spontaneously the One as I-I, which, however, is not the ego. It is the Real, the Perfection. That Real is the Self.

சாதகத்தி லேதுவிதஞ் சாத்தியத்தி லத்துவித
மோதுகின்ற வாதமது முண்மையல — வாதரவாய்த்
தான்றேடுங் காலுந் தனையடைந்த காலத்துந்
தான்றசம னன்றியார் தான்.

During *sadhana* it is *Dwaita*, with attainment it is *Adwaita*, —this contention is not true. When each (of the ten) was anxiously searching for himself, as well as when he discovered himself, who was the tenth man but verily himself?

அகிலவே தாந்தசித் தாந்தசா ரத்தை
யகமுண்மை யாக வறைவல் — அகமிறந்
ததுவாகி லறிவுரு வாமவ
வகமடகே நிற்ப மறி.

I shall proclaim in truth the quintessence of the established conclusions of the entire *Vedanta*. Know that when the ego is destroyed and it becomes THAT, then verily that Self as pure Consciousness alone remains.

—Ulladu Narpadu

ஐயே ! அதிசுலபம் — ஆன்மவித்தை
ஐயே ! அதிசுலபம்.
தன்னை யறிதலின்றி யென்னை யறிந்திடினென் ?
றன்னை யறிந்திடிற் பின்னை யென்னை யறிவதற்கு ?
பின்ன வுயிர்களில் பின்னமில் விளக்கெனுந்
தன்னைத் தன்னிலுணர மின்னுந் தன்னுள்ளான்ம —
ப்ரகாசமே : அருள்விலாசமே : அகவிநாசமே :
இன்பவிகாசமே.

Ha! very easy is Self-Knowledge.
Very easy it is.

Without knowing the Self, of what use is knowing anything else?
And what else remains to know when one has realised the Self?
That Self, which shines undifferentiated in the different individual beings.
Will shine forth resplendent when one realises the Self in oneself,
That is the manifestation of Grace; it is ego's destruction;
it is the blossoming of Bliss.

—Atma-vidya

कर्तुराज्ञया प्राप्यते फलम् ।
कर्म किं परं कर्म तज्जडम् ॥
ईश्वरार्पितं नेच्छया कृतम् ।
चित्तशोधकं मुक्तिसाधकम् ॥
कायवाङ्मनः कार्यमुत्तमम् ।
पूजनं जपश्चिन्तनं क्रमात् ॥
भेदभावनात् सोऽहमित्यसौ ।
भावनाऽभिदा पावनी मता ॥
नष्टमानसोत्कृष्टयोगिनः ।
कृत्यमस्ति किं स्वस्थितिं यतः ॥
अहमपेतकं निजविभानकम् ।
महदिदं तपो रमणवागियम् ॥

As the Lord ordains, *Karma* yields its fruit;
How can *Karma* be supreme? It is but insentient.
Acts dedicated to the Lord and done without desire
Purify the mind and lead one to Liberation.
Acts of worship done by the body,
Of chanting done by speech,
And practice of meditation within the mind,
Are superior one to the other
In the above given order.
The contemplation, "He am I", is purer
Than that done with the sense of differentiation.
What remains yet to be done
For the supreme *Yogi* whose mind is wiped out
And who in the Self is firmly established?
When the ego is extinguished, the Real shines forth;
This, indeed, is great *Tapas*, so says Sri Ramana.

— *Upadesa Sarah*

देहं मृण्मयवज्जडात्मकमहंबुद्धिर्नतस्यास्त्यतो
नाहं तत्तदपेतसुप्तिसमये सिद्धात्मसद्भावतः ।
कोऽहं भावयुतः कुतो वरधिया दृष्ट्वात्मनिष्ठात्मनां
सोऽहं स्फूर्तितयाऽरुणाचलशिवः पूर्णोविभाति स्वयम् ॥

The body is insentient like a clod of earth, and to it there is not the I-ness. And even in deep sleep, when we are disentangled from the body, we do exist as the self-established **Atman.**

Therefore, the 'I' is not the body. Enquire, then, '*Who am I?*' 'Whence am I?' In the Heart of those who, seeking thus with keen insight, stay in *Atmanishtha*, there shines forth Lord Arunachala as 'I-am-That'-Consciousness, which is self-luminous and perfect.

The Maharshi attained the highest peaks of this supreme philosophy and respires their thin rarefied air, in which persons less trained and less endowed with Divine strength might easily faint and fail. His method of rigorous self-analysis has taken him to the supreme state of Liberation, but to those who have not attained that state it is like walking on a razor's edge. This is the reason why he elucidates and explains the preliminary *sadhanas* as well. He advises the practice of mind-control, and gives a high place to *Bhakti* among the *sadhanas*. He gives a remarkable synthesis of *Bhakti* and *Jnana.*

> Whether you make *dhyana* on God or the Self, it is immaterial; for the goal is the same. ...... Keeping God in your mind becomes *dhyana* and *dhyana* is the stage before Realisation. ...... The eternal, unbroken, natural state of abiding in the Self is *Jnana.* To abide in the Self, you must love the Self. Since God is verily the Self, love of Self is love of God; and that is *Bhakti. Jnana* and *Bhakti* are thus one and the same.
>
> (*Maharshi's Gospel, Book I.*)

Similarly, the Sage elucidates the true significance of *japa.*

> *Japa* means clinging to one thought to the exclusion of all other thoughts. That is its purpose. It leads to *dhyana* which ends in Self-realisation or *Jnana.*
>
> (*Ibid.*)

Though Sri Maharshi himself had no *Guru* in human form, from the viewpoint of the aspirant who seeks guidance in *sadhana*, the Sage affirms the importance of the *Guru's* help and reveals the spiritual significance of *Guru-kripa.* He says:

> The *Guru* is both 'external' and 'internal'. From the exterior He gives a push to the mind to turn inward; from the 'interior' He pulls the mind towards the Self and helps in the quieting of the mind. That is *Guru-kripa.* There is no difference between God, *Guru* and the Self. .... The Master is within; meditation (on the Master) is meant to remove the ignorant idea that He is outside. ...... But as long as you think you are separate or that you are the body, so long the Master 'without'

> is also necessary, and he will appear as if with a body. When the wrong identification of oneself with the body ceases, the Master will be found as none other than the Self. ...... The devotee thinks that the Master is a man like himself, and expects a relationship as between two physical bodies. But the *Guru* who is God or the Self incarnate, works from within, helps the man to see the error of his ways and guides him in the right path until he realises the Self within. ...... The ego is like a powerful elephant and cannot be brought under control by anything less than a lion, which, in this instance, is no other than the *Guru* whose very look makes the elephant-like ego tremble and die. ..... You will know in due course that your glory lies where you cease to exist. In order to gain that State, you should surrender yourself. Then the Master sees that you are in a fit state to receive guidance and He guides you. ...... Silence is the most potent form of the *Guru's* work. However vast and emphatic the scriptures may be, they fail in their effect. The *Guru* is quiet and grace prevails in all. This Silence is more vast and more emphatic than all the scriptures put together. (*Ibid.*)

Explaining the transcendental significance of this Silence which is incomparably superior to giving lectures and discourses, the Sage says:

> Silence is Ever-speaking; it is the perennial flow of language; and is interrupted by speaking, for words obstruct this mute Language. Silence is unceasing Eloquence. It is the best Language. ... Preaching is simple communication of Knowledge; it can be really done in Silence only. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another, who sits in a holy presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better: to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending out Inner Force? (*Ibid.*)

Such, in brief, is Bhagavan Sri Ramana's Vision of the Infinite, Eternal Light of the Atman, which transcends speech and thought,—and such is his technique of the search for and attainment of the Light of lights! Swami Siddheswarananda who was a frequent visitor at Sri Ramanashram and is an ardent devotee of Bhagavan Sri Ramana quotes the vivid and remarkable description Mon. LaCombe gives of the Sage's

presence. "His person sheds a force consisting of intelligence and mastery of the Self," writes the French savant. "A flashing eye, intense and fixed without harshness, Olympian softness of gesture, slender and delicate in an immobile body, he (Sri Ramana Maharshi) is considered by excellent judges to be a very authentic Yogi and to have reached the highest Realisation." Describing the Sage's realisation of *Sahajasthiti*, Swami Siddheswarananda writes, "Whoever has occasion to examine at first-hand the Maharshi, knows full well that he is neither an 'extrovert' nor an 'introvert'. He is the most normal man that one could ever find. He is in effect a *Sthitaprajna*, a man whose Wisdom is solidly founded." He refers to the life of Maharshi as "that Life of Illumination, which, like the fire that burns on the Hill of Arunachala, is a veritable Lighthouse for those who wish to find in modern India the revivifying effect of the teachings of the Upanishads consecrated by time."

Let me close this essay with the memorable passages from the Upanishad and the Gita which refer to the Light of the lights, the Light of Self-realisation, the Light Supreme:

न तत्र सूर्योभाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमाविद्युतो भान्तिकुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

There shines not the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor even the lightning. How, then, can fire shine forth there? After that self-effulgent Brahman, all these, the sun, moon, stars, shine forth. Because of that Supreme Brahman's effulgence, all these do shine forth.

(*Kathopanishad* II, V, 15.)

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥

Nor sun nor moon nor fire illumine It: and Which having attained one returns not that is my Abode Supreme.

(*Bhagavad Gita* XV, 6.)

TO

BELOVED BHAGAVAN
THE LORD OF LOVE

Oh Lord of Love, Who dwells within my heart!
May I sing Thy Praise through all Eternity.
Thou, the Adorable One, the All-compassionate,
Whose Loving smile illumines all the world,
Who art tender as a mother and strong as a father,
Thou, whose sublime life is an inspiring sermon,
Fill me with Thy Presence, Beloved Master, with the
Nectar of Thy Grace;
May Thy great Love and Light fill my heart to the full.

Resting secure in Thy Presence,
And knowing whence cometh Peace, Guidance and Strength,
May I always listen; for, in the Silence I hear Thy Voice,—
The Voice of God.

—*Eleanor Pauline Noye*
(California)

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

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Sri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai or "Arunachala" opens up a dawn in the spiritual understanding of the Modern Day. It would be difficult to estimate the influence that he had brought to bear on us and our spiritual future. Firstly, it would be an impertinence on our part, secondly it would be an impossible task to sum up the subtle inestimable fullness of his understanding and realisation. We enjoy the perfume of his presence, but we cannot obviously know to which infinite stretches of space the perfume is being carried. That it had gone a very large distance round the earth is evident from the fact that seekers after peace and understanding, scholars and savants of both the East and the West have unreservedly stood witness to his attainment and the rare quality of the aroma of his spiritual Being. However it is the duty of every man to give thanks and offer flowers of reverence and homage to great souls who have reached their end and fulfilment and blazed the trail for many a weary wanderer. For, it is a fact that the emancipation of fulfilment of even one individual involves a brightening of the consciousness in every other. And here is seen an occult identity of all in the One, the One about which Sri Ramana speaks.

Though I have had unique opportunities of studying some of the characteristic works of Sri Ramana, yet it was only in April 1947 that I had the good fortune of beholding him face to face. This *darshan* of the Sage is an experience in itself. It is not capable of being described. So very casual yet pregnant, so very unobtrusive yet deeply significant, almost everything that occurs in the Ashram seems to be inundated with the quiet consciousness of the Master. Such indeed was my reflective impression. Pleasant, deeply penetrating and inspiring somewhere in the depths, it showed that the activity of the Spirit is of a different order and kind from what we know to be "activity".

What I have written here is how I understand Sri Ramana; it is an expression of my reactions or responses to the Philosophy, if it can

be so called, of Sri Ramana. I shall not presume to pass any criticism on what is an Experience of significance which I have not had the good fortune to know. Though I may not know how to make the perfume, I can yet say that the perfume is good, pleasant and increasingly pleasant every moment of the contemplation and enjoyment.

At first let me remark that it is much more easy to deal with a system of thought from a purely philosophical point of view. So many of our scholars of Vedanta indeed take delight in viewing it in such a manner. But mystical experience is a transcending consciousness. Sri Ramana teaches that there is only one Self, that it is all. It is monism surcharged with the realisation of the entire identity of all. In Sri Ramana, Advaita has taken concrete shape or embodiment and personality and cannot be dismissed lightly as identical with the monistics of Western Philosophy, that "bloodless ballet of impalpable categories" or the abstract Absolute Experience of Bradley & Co. Confronted with the experience of Advaita as expressed by Sri Ramana, that there is only Spirit that is the Self, that it is One, that the world and I originate from it apart from it are illusion, it becomes necessary to seek the key to the solution. Sri Ramana's supreme clarity and decisive knowledge is revealed in his *Ulladu Narpadu*, the forty verses on *Sad-Vidya*.

Sri Ramana's consciousness illumined with tremendous power of discrimination, proceeds to find out the nature of the self, that which all of us call the "I", its origin, so to speak. On this "I"-consciousness hinges all experience, subjective or objective all relative being in one word. He points out that this "I"-consciousness has both a beginning and an end in waking consciousness and sleep or trance respectively. What is persistent is not the "I"-consciousness but a consciousness other than and behind the "I". Thus the origin of the "I" when discovered will make us get rid of the delusion that we are the body, for the I-body is the unity, albeit delusive, that brings about all the confusions and separative existence and struggle and rebirth and *karma* etc.... "Who am I?" is the fundamental question posed by Sri Ramana. This question is comparable to Kant's famous question "How is experience possible?" Instead of walking down the corridor to the phenomenal being like Kant, Sri Ramana ascended up to the Noumenal being. This is the difference in the procedures of the West and the East. Experience being experience of the "I", it is necessary to investigate into the nature of "I" and how it originates. The world

and our self-consciousness as individuals having bodies distinguishing us from one another, originate from something else which is fundamental, which is capable of appearing as many, diversified and distinguished as souls and objects. It is the business of mystic realisation to discover the ground or source or origin of all that we perceive, all processes included. Sri Ramana says "Although the world and knowledge (of it) rise and set together, it is by the knowledge only that the world is made apparent. Perfection which the world and knowledge (of it) rise and in which they set, and which (Itself) shines without rising and setting (as pure Consciousness) is the sole "Reality" (*Ulladu Narpadu* verse 7). In other words, Sri Ramana's first question is an enquiry into the Source. It is a reinterpretation of the Vedanta Sutra जन्माद् यस्य यतः "Janmad yasya yatah" (I. i. 2). The Self is that from which everything originates and to which everything refers and returns. This source is found in the depths of being, as the ever-present substantial spiritual basis of all experience, relative or absolute knowledge or ignorance.[1] *This* has to be discovered by concentrated or directed discrimination or awareness, even as J. Krishnamurti says, *that* restores or discovers the one; this discrimination is different from the philosophical intellect which discovers difference or divides the one. This discrimination does two things, it breaks up the illusion that the soul and the body are identical, it breaks up the illusion that the soul is other than Universal.

Sri Ramana's approach to the one Reality is definitely that of the *Jnani*. What is that by which all this is acting or being or becoming? Who is that who sustains all these activities and objectives and objects? That it is a consciousness there seems to be no doubt. But what precisely is the nature of that consciousness? "To those who do not know the Self and those who do, the body certainly is 'I'. To those who do not know the Self the 'I' is limited to the body only. To those who know the Self within the body, the 'I' shines without limits by itself. To those who have not Knowledge and to those who have, the world is reality. To those who have not Knowledge reality is limited to the measure of the world. To those who have Knowledge, That which underlies the world is Reality, formless and infinite. This is

[1] It is suggestively stated that *A-ham* is indeed the *alpha* and *omega* of *deva-nagari* script. It is also the sum total of our experience, both the origin and the end of created processes find their expression in A-ham or "I".

the difference between them." (*Ulladu Narpadu*, verses 17 & 18). This approach to Reality by the Sage of Arunachala recalls strongly the opening *mantra* of the Kenopanishad, **केनेषितं पतति प्रेषितं मनः । केन प्राणः प्रथमः प्रैति युक्तः । केनेषिता वाचमिमां वदन्ति** . . . . "What is that, by which all these operations of the mind, breath, speech, perceiving or sensing are being carried on?" That this is the "I" or Self there seems to be no doubt about it. "Can there be sight or objects seen without an eye?" "The eye is the Self and the eye infinite." (*Ulladu Narpadu*, verse 4). The Kenopanishad calls the Self the eye of the eye, ear of the ear, speech of the speech, mind of the mind, breath of the breath; and might not we, adopting in this context the expression used in another Upanishad, say that this is the Self of all selves or "I"s. "Knowing this inner Self by which everything is or exists, one finds that the Self within the body, the "I", shines without limits by Itself." (*Ulladu Narpadu*, verse 17). When one knows the Self, the origin of knowledge and its objects, the knowledge and the objects fall away, or rather are left behind, or in another sense they are all withdrawn into the experience of the Infinite. The Kenopanishad instructs that this inner or occult knowledge of the Self is capable of being attained by means of reflection **प्रतिबोध विदितं मतम्** and that it leads to the experience of the Immortal, and that thereafter one is or acts and lives by the **वीर्य** or natural power or inherent reality of the Self—**आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यम् ।** The *Jnani* is one who having known this Self, not the surface "I", but the real "I" Universal and Infinite that sustains all, is sustained in the immortal, ever-present experience of the Self which is all that is, was or ever shall be, freed from the ignorance and the relative knowledges or else knowing them to be products of the subtle disruption that occurs in the pose of the "I". But most characteristically the instruction of the Kenopanishad which finds exquisite verification or exemplification in Sri Ramana's *Upadesa* or *Adesa* is found at the end of that Upanishad. The Upanishad concludes: **तस्यैष आदेशो यदेतद् विद्युतो व्यद्युतदा इतीन्न्यमीमिषदा इत्यधिदैवतम् ॥ अथाध्यात्मं यदेतद् गच्छतीव च मनोऽनेन चैतद्[1] उपस्मरत्यभीक्ष्णं सङ्कल्पः ॥ तद्ध तद्वनं नाम तद्वनमित्युपासितव्यं स य वेदाभि हैनं सर्वाणि भूतानि संवाञ्छन्ति ॥** The Divine or Self appears to the devotee, the seeker after knowledge of the spirit, the Who that is behind all seeings and knowings, hearings

[1] *na caitad* is the reading of Sri Ramanuja, cf. *Kenopanishad Bhasya* edited by Dr. K. C. Varadachari and D. T. Tatacharya, Sri Venkateswara Oriental Series No. 8.

and speech, the Lord who wins the victories for the Gods[1] so to speak, even like the light of the lightning, swift and blinding which blinds the individuals so as to make them absolutely "closed" to all externalised experiences, which cuts radically the knot of attachment to senses and sensory objects which are more poisonous than poison, as Sri Ramana points out; this is the meaning of the phrase, *nyamimisada.* The Divine Self or I in the heart is the One thing that remains as the Object of endeavour, if we may speak of it. Thereafter the individual's mind is, as it were, annihilated or gone, and by that supreme vision of the selfness pure effulgent *Jotis* within, the individual moves into the Divine with a consecrated will. Or we may, adopting another reading, *na caitad upasmaratyabhikshnam samkalpah*, say that all will is gone, there is nothing to follow or go after anything now that the extraverted mind is extinguished. This is the view expounded by Sri Ramana[2]. Yet there is a wonderful instruction granted namely that this Light is to be contemplated upon as *Tad Vanam*, the supreme Garden of Delight, and that one who contemplated on that Self as the *Tadvanam* himself becomes desired for by all creatures, *sarvani bhutani.*

To Sri Ramana as well as to most mystics this inner Light, the light that lightnings cannot match, the Soul or Self-light, happens of sudden and out of radical untying of the knot that 'originates between the unconscious body and the pure consciousness' (*Ulladu Narpadu*, verse 24). Once this is untied the 'I' no longer is the body-sense-configuration but the inward deep Heart-consciousness that is the 'real I' (*Nan* or *Aham*) whose voice is heard within. No longer does the *ahamkara* play the role of the 'I', the mind having been reversed, introverted or rather inverted. By this disjunction of the mind from its outer movement, the illusion that is most characteristic of deluded life and all types of illusion, namely, *dehatma-bhava*, gets uprooted. It is then that one perceives that bondage had never been, that all that is is the Self alone and nothing other. This is the central instruction, *adesa*, of Sri Ramana. One becomes adorable infinite, unlimited and unbound. All existence is discovered as pure, real Consciousness unlimited by any condition of space-time-body nexus. There is no cognition of a body or an ego or a world as other than the Self or apart from the Self. They

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1 The term "gods" is sometimes explained as illuminating senses or their *adhisthana devatas* or spiritual powers. The word *adhidaivatam* has unfortunately been misunderstood or not carefully interpreted by scholars so far, for very obvious reasons.

2 Cf. *Ulladu Narpadu*, verse 13.

obviously are no 'other'. The Self is, indeed, the Heart transcendent as well as immanent within the body, and it is even explained that this description of transcendent-immanent is not quite correct. For what is real is the I, and "transcendent" and "immanent" are but relative to the concept of the body. The Self is established in itself. This realisation is a radical experience through persistent inversion of the mind into its own origin, for that is the only way of penetration into the Heart 'I'. To Sri Ramana it happened through this path, the one path which is the culmination of all paths—for all paths lead to this final poise of the plunging mind which dives into itself or its origin in the Heart. The mind must be crossed. As Sri Aurobindo also stated in his aphorisms: "ego was the helper, ego is the bar". Beyond the ego is the real Self the universal that is the stem of the finite and the ego.

Those who plead for the evolution or gradual attainment of the soul through many births are also moving towards this destination. The destination is important, release utter and complete from bondage-consciousness is essential. This is the immediate imperative. Once the *dehatma-bhava* is extinguished, once the limiting mind is set at rest, and the pseudo-self, *ahamkara*, that eats the bitter fruits and enjoys and suffers is liquidated by the consciousness of the 'I', the Self, the Heart, the Universal One Divine — for Self-realisation is the realisation of the Divine or God-realisation — the life that is led though apparently like any other is yet characteristically different. As the Upanishad puts it, they become centres of light and joy and adorability — *sarvani bhutani abhi samvancchanti,* **सर्वाणि भूतानि संवाञ्छन्ति**, centres of liberation, gardens of delight. The Divine enjoyed as Self, as *Tadvanam*, **तद्वनम्**, as *Tadjjalan*, **तज्जलान्** as *Sarvam* **सर्वं** without any restriction or limitation or division, makes these one in every manner with the Divine.

In this connection I may mention a point of similarity that crossed my mind between the realisation of Sri Ramana and Sri Nammalvar, known also as Sri Alvar Satakopa.[1] Madhurakavi, it is stated in the traditional accounts, asked Nammalvar a remarkable question when he first met him. "*Settatin vayarrir siriyadu pirandal, ettaitinru-enge kidakkum?*"

1 According to the traditional account, Nammalvar was never subject to nescience. It is said that while he was in his mother's womb, the breath-principle called **sata** sought to envelope him in order to cast on him the veil of *maya* (as in the case of all *jivas* taking birth), when he rebuked (**kopa**) it (the breath-principle) and successfully resisted its approach. Hence the name **Satakopa**. [Ed.]

"செத்தத்தின் வயிற்றிற் சிறியது பிறந்தால்,
எத்தைத்தின்று எங்கே கிடக்கும் ?"

When the soul is born of the womb of the inconscient, what enjoying where does be ?—to which Nammalvar replied "*Attaitinru ange kidakkum*"

"அத்தைத்தின்று அங்கே கிடக்கும்."

Eating That [the Supreme] it remains There.[1] From this reply Madhurakavi, who was a very good seer and who wandered the whole of India to find his Guru, discerned that Nammalvar was a realised soul, one whose Self was the Divine One All. Nammalvar was utterly absorbed in the Divine alone and enjoying That alone whom he adored, and was entered into by That. He was the food and the eater. This meaning was not clearly perceived by most commentators. Sri Ramana's attainment is closely akin to this abiding in the Self: "See Thyself and See the Lord. That is the revealed word and hard is its sense indeed. For the seeing Self is not to be seen. How then is Sight of the Lord? To be *food* unto Him, that indeed is to See Him." (*Ulladu Narpadu* verse 21.) The realisation of Brahman as *rasa* is such that one becomes utterly lost or eaten up by the Delight even during the eating of It. Thus the eater and the eaten become one. This is knowledge by identity. The liberated Seer lives like Sri Nammalvar or Sri Ramana in the Self alone, for such a one all is Self, nought else. The questions of *jivanmukti* or *videhamukti* are irrelevant. Freed from all delution established in the Self, the Divine, such are of light and freedom of the Self that is All.

It would not be correct to say that what they hold is *advaita* in the ordinary sense of the philosophers or disputationists. Intellectual solutions are no solutions at all. There is only the oneness of the Self which is the truth at all stages, which can never be extinguished nor even smothered by any movement of the exteriorised mind. There is only a 'play' of consciousness which passes between the 'I'-world and the deep 'I' which is understood and dissolved by the realisation of the Self; and the poise of the 'I' as body-delimited or body-being is shifted to that Self. The question would yet remain 'Why this poise or shift of poise?

1. **Attai means That and not *prakriti*. The question refers to the knower and not the ordinary man, the non-seeker who has no problem at all.**

"***Atta charachara grahanat*" says the Vedanta Sutra.**

But then, perhaps, it is better first to know the Self and then seek to know, if anything else has to be known about It from It; perhaps, there may be nothing to know then, perhaps all questions get answered without our asking It, even as it has been the case in the very instance by the very presence and company of Sri Ramana.

We are in a critical age, an age of advanced mechanical civilization and crucial political probation. Frustration of the inner life as well as the impoverishment of individual personality are what we are witnessing. The most carefully intellectual persons are confronted with problems that need universalized perceptives. Undoubtedly we find people anxiously exploiting the wonderful ideals of the East for their own purposes of egoistic aggrandisement and insular sovereignty. Ideals have a tendency to become slogans, clap-trap. Even Vedanta has most often become just a slogan and a clap-trap. It is amidst such confusion and clangs of slogans that we have lights of immense magnitudes, peaks of Self-realisation like the Maharshi Sri Ramana, who show that *Vedanta*, *Advaita* or any other is not merely a course of philosophy but a way of life, a way to real Selfhood, universal, decisive and fundamental, not through mere sentimentality nor mere logistics but intuitive discrimination. Sri Ramana brings back to Mankind the Reality of the Ancient Seers, *Rishis*. He reveals the Himalayan possibilities of peace, soul-peace, that annihilates all strife, and of perennial life that tolerates no distrust or disruption. Sages like Sri Ramana reveal that immense and infinite beatitude that suffers no diminition or degradation. By their very attainment, as I remarked, they have determined the liberation of all as inevitable and actual. These, indeed, are the true liberators of mankind and the world. These are the challenge to the atom-bomb and political grabbing and dictatorial ambitions of haves and have-nots. The life of Sri Ramana bears witness to the ever-abiding reality of the teachings of the Vedic Seers, and continues uninterrupted the spiritual tradition of the *Sanatana* Philosophy. Therefore, may we, who are fortunately witnesses and enjoyers of His attainment and participators in His glory and splendid *Santi*, sing the song of eternal liberation.

May Sri Ramana be with us for ever and ever more.

SRI RAMANA'S SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY
AND
MODERN THOUGHT

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Sri Ramana Maharshi is a modern Sage in the sense that he is living in our time and has been influencing our spiritual life in his own unique way for the last fifty years. His teachings are fairly well-known in India and in some parts of the civilized world. It will be appropriate to examine here some aspects of his philosophy of life in the light of modern thought to see how far they are in consonance with it and what are the elements in which they agree. Another reason for this comparison is that modern thought and modern development of knowledge are not prepared to accept any dogma or theory of things eternal or mundane unless it is backed up by scientific tests and its conclusion is based on direct personal experience and observation.

In the evolution of modern thought reason, observation and experiment have played a prominent part. Every new and old theory is subjected to a certain critical test in the light of dry reason before it is given any credence or accepted as a working hypothesis. The Maharshi himself has given its rightful place to reason in his scheme of philosophy and enjoins us to search within our own selves what we really are. We have to carry this investigation with our own self-effort and direct observation of our mental life. There is a growing idea in the West that man in the waking consciousness is but a small fragment of the real man, that man transcends his body and that he is decidedly greater than his waking mind and consciousness. There is evidence in plenty, daily forthcoming from most unexpected quarters, to show that human consciousness is far larger and fuller than the consciousness expressed through the physical brain. This idea of a larger consciousness, larger than the waking consciousness in man, which has the fullest

sanction in ancient Hindu thought and philosophy, is one that has come to be recognised not only by modern psychology but also by modern science in the West.

The particular branch of modern science which comes into close touch with the ancient philosophical thought of the East is that of psychology. Psychology in its modern form is gradually coming nearer the ancient psychology of the East. The method of introspection, of observation of one's own mental processes, was till recently discountenanced by modern thought, but psychologists are now encouraging it to a greater extent. Among these psychologists William James distinguishes between the Pure Ego and the Empirical Ego.

Some modern thinkers have asserted that it is necessary to first study the brain, the nervous system and mechanism in man, whereby thought is articulated, so to say, in the brain. So far were they inclined to go in making rash statements that it was deliberately laid down that thought was produced *by* the brain. Such a famous psychologist as the German Carl Vogt declared that the brain produced thought as liver produced bile. The immemorial psychology of the East stands in direct opposition to this statement. The Maharshi's point of view, in perfect conformity with the ancient Hindu thought, is founded on the idea that man in essence is not the physical body but the living Spirit, not a mere form but the eternal Intelligence itself. Maharshi's psychological concept is founded on the notion that this living Intelligence, this Entity, is the primary thing to be understood. Instead of considering life and consciousness as a sort of effervescence resulting from bodily mechanism, the Maharshi declares that the primary fact is the fact of Consciousness and that matter is but its garment, its instrument, arranged and guided by this Intelligence. The Maharshi, endorsing the view of the *Chhandogya Upanishad,* says that the Atman alone exists, and that the body and the senses are all the results of the will of the Atman. In '*Who am I?*' (page 11) he says "Atman alone exists and is real. The world, the individual soul are . . . . imaginary creations in the Atman, they appear and disappear simultaneously. Verily the Self alone is the world, the 'I' or ego. All that exists is but the manifestation of the Supreme." What does modern science say? In his book, *The Limitations of Science*, (p. 123) J. W. N. Sullivan says, "There is also the hypothesis held by a few distinguished scientists that *life* is as old as matter, and, in that sense, has had no origin." Further the same author in his

Bases of Modern Science (pp. 210-11) says, "It is quite possible that the actual substance of the Universe is *mental*, that the stuff of events is similar to percepts. The fact that a piece of matter has been reduced by the relativity theory to a system of events, that it is no longer regarded as the enduring stuff of the world, makes the hypothesis that the 'physical' and the 'mental' are essentially similar very possible." In this respect, the words of the Maharshi are crystal clear. In '*Who am I?*' (page 5) he says:

> "Nor is there any such thing as the physical world apart from and independent of thought. .... Just as the spider draws out the thread of the cobweb from within itself and withdraws it again into itself, *the mind* projects the world and absorbs it back into itself."

That is the metaphysical basis of Sri Ramana's philosophy, which we see is quite in harmony with the trend of modern scientific thought. But how does he solve the moral problem of good and evil? Does he simply etherealize all evil and deny the problem? No. The real Master that he is, the Maharshi tells you: "All the evil lies in you in the form of the ego; endeavour first to eradicate it, instead of probing into the evil *you* see in others. As you are, so is the world." It is a hard precept to practise,—hard, indeed, even to accept, unless you have the purity of heart and understanding, without which, however, no spiritual endeavour is at all possible. In a few lines the Sage tells you the attitude you should adopt towards the external world, which, in fact is not external to your mind. In '*Who am I?*' (page 28) he says:

> "There are no two minds, one good and the other evil. It is only the *vasanas* or tendencies of the mind that are of two kinds,—good and favourable, evil and unfavourable. When the mind is associated with the former, it is called good; and when associated with the latter, it is called evil. However evil-minded other people may *appear* to you, it is not proper to hate and despise them. Likes and dislikes, love and hatred are equally to be eschewed. It is also not proper to let the mind often rest on objects or affairs of mundane life. As far as possible one should not interfere in the affairs of others. *Everything offered to others is really an offering to oneself; and if only this truth is realized, who is there that would refuse anything to others?*"

These words are like nectar to the true aspirant who seeks to realise in himself the highest ideals ever conceived by man. All the

good one seeks to do for others must be, and in essence really is, the good one does for oneself. Otherwise, the pretence of doing good to others, of removing the evil outside, is at best a pious platitude, at the worst rank hypocrisy. Know this first, that unless you realize purity and goodness in yourself, you cannot do anything really good to "others."

The Sage abides in the transcendental State of mindlessness: he is a *Trigunatita*, त्रिगुणातीत. For a description of this transcendental State of Absolute Being, untouched by good and evil, I cannot do better than quote the learned words of Dr. Bhagwan Das (*Science of Peace*, p. 329). "The Knower of Brahman knows that there is no ruthless cruelty, no nightmare agony of helplessness in it, for, at every moment, each condition is essentially voluntary, the product of that utterly free will of the *Self* (and therefore of all selves), which there is none else to bend and curb in any way, the will that is truly liberated from all bondage. He knows that because all things, all *Jivas* and all *Iswaras*, belong to, nay, are in the *Self* already, therefore whatever a self wishes, that, with all its consequences, will surely belong to it, if it only earnestly wishes; this earnest wish itself being the essence of *yoga*, with its three co-equal factors of *Bakti*, *Jnana* and *Karma*, corresponding to *Ichchha*, *Jnana* and *Kriya* respectively. Knowing all this, he knoweth, he cogniseth Brahman; and looking on all selves as himself desiring their happiness as he laboureth for his own, he realizeth and is Brahman. Such an one is truly *Mukta*, free from the fearful bonds of doubt; he knows and is the Absolute, the Self absolved from all the limitations of the not-Self. To him belongs the everlasting Peace!" This is the rationale and fundamental basis of all our modern institutions of social service, ideals of common humanity, economic welfare and religious unity. Let us try and apply them to modern problems of life that confront us today.

If we look round the world today we find it disintegrated, divided, confused, distracted and hopelessly tormented. The march of science with its ever-increasing inventions, discoveries, additions to our physical comforts, facilities of every kind, has not solved our economic, social and political problems. In fact human institutions are in a more complicated condition now than they were ever before. Religions of the world, instead of being a blessing to humanity, are found to be a curse, as they promote more of disharmony, ill-will and animosity than of harmony, good-will and brotherliness. What is all this due to? Is there any

solution for these complex and seemingly insoluble problems? Is there any hope for the future of humanity?

So long as the world is wholly dominated by materialism and its innumerable off-shoots, it will give rise to more complications than we can think of. There is no hope for humanity of the future unless it changes its outlook. The world has given long and wearied trial to materialistic ideals. It would be worthwhile to investigate other avenues, new lines of thought and other possibilities of a remedy. In all ages, side by side with a material outlook, there have always existed spiritual values, and those who have had enough experience of this known, palpable world and have failed to find anything in it, have turned their attention to spiritual ideals, to higher values. We have come to a stage in our present-day civilization when the need for a change of outlook and fresh investigation has become urgent and imperative. If we pay no heed to this call, nothing but ruin will overtake us. None can overlook the fact that in spite of his material wealth and prosperity, his inventive genius and organising skill and aptitude for mass production, the man of today is nowhere near true happiness. His desires and wants increase a hundredfold more quickly than they can be fulfilled. As the astute thinker and well-known psychologist, Dr. C. G. Jung, observes, the materialistic mind fails to discern the fact that the root of the malady lies in oneself, that one's misery and happiness are primarily of one's own making, and that they are the inevitable outcome of one's externalised outlook which tries to ignore the higher calls of the Spirit within. The tragedy lies in the fact that the modern man fails to see that unless his inward being is rebuilt on spiritual foundations, his material prosperity and power can never make him happy.

In this context we can at once see that Bhagavan Sri Ramana has a momentous message to offer to the whole of humanity. "Thou art the Bliss itself," declares the Sage, "and needest no external props, aid and advantages. Seek within, and thou shalt realise thy blissful nature. He that gave you life knows best what use to make of it for the good of the world. Your life of purity and peace will enrich the world a hundred-fold more than you can ever imagine you would be able to do through a world-wide marshalling of the forces of the States towards organized philanthropy and material aid to needy humanity." Truly, the need of the day is not an addition to the material comforts of the worldly man much less the accumulation of greater power to con-

trol the destinies of innocent millions, not even the sickening philanthropy of the patronizing type crazy for modernized world-publicity, but the deeper culture of the soul which makes man self-reliant and strong, which will unfold before him the vision of oneness of life he can realise through self-denial and will enable him to build a social structure on spiritual foundations first laid in his own heart. Undoubtedly, the present-day need is for the peace and purity of the soul, especially in those who happen to wield the power and influence to control the destiny of vast masses of humanity.

For the materialist it is hard to believe that there is any such realm as the spiritual, since it cannot be demonstrated to the physical eye. But we have in our midst Sages and Saints contact with whom and close observation of whose lives will reveal to us that the claim put forth by the votaries of spiritual values has substance and reality. One such Sage, not inaccessible to us, is Ramana Maharshi by contact with whom we can change our outlook and convince ourselves not only of the reality but of the immense utility of spiritual values. His method of reform and uplift is quite different from that of any other reformer or philanthropist. He does not believe in propaganda of any kind, nor does he lecture to any of his numerous admirers and devotees. Most of the time he sits silently, transforming the hearts and minds of those who are privileged to be near him. By the living example of his intensely methodical and practical life he helps and reforms us. His plain, simple and unsophisticated philosophy vividly reflected in his day-to-day conduct serves as a key to unlock the mystery of life and solves in a practical way some of the complicated social, political, religious and economic problems that confront us today. He implicitly believes in the divinity and the unity of life. He enjoins on us that there is only One Self, One Life which is vibrant in every atom, One Light that shines in every creature, One Love that embraces all in Oneness. Setting aside all earthly considerations, if we can bring ourselves to believe even tentatively that there is only One Life dwelling equally in the hearts of all, and that God is the common source of our being, then our hitherto perverted attitude to the problems of every-day life will have been removed to no small extent.

On the basis of this fundamental principle, that all human beings share one common life, have a common interest in many things and have a common destiny, we can, in the light of Sri Ramana Maharshi's

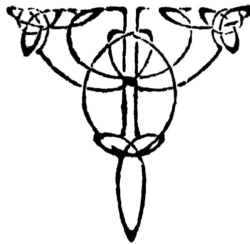
philosophy of life, safely assume for our guidance that we have to live and let others live. Democracy of spirit cements our differences, provides us with a sound basis for mutual co-operation, hearty good-will, fellow-feeling and the joy of living in the life of others. If this principle is fully grasped, much of the ills of life from which we suffer today would slowly but surely disappear. If the tendency to exploit each other could be exchanged for mutual aid and co-operation, much of the complexity and confusion of our economic and political life would possibly be removed. Similarly, social problems in the light of One Self may have better solutions; social justice, opportunity for all, can be attained by the simple recognition of the unity and divinity of human life.

Sri Maharshi sees the same Atman dwelling in the hearts of all, high or low, man or woman. On this ground women are not deprived of their privilege of having social equality and spiritual guidance as they were in olden days. In the matter of religion also Maharshi's silent influence has revolutionised our inner outlook. One who earnestly believes in the supremacy of the Self cannot possibly entertain any *bheda-bhava* (भेदभाव) in his heart. Our revered Maharshi belongs to no creed, no religion, no institution, and yet he respects and recognises all the great teachers of humanity, the saints, sages, prophets and *avatars*, and fully knows that they are linked together in One Spiritual hierarchy and have one common aim, namely the regeneration of the whole of the human race in its final evolution to spiritual realization. Name and form, in his sight, do not matter. What does matter is the One Self without a second, who is manifested in the innumerable forms that abide not for ever. That which alone abides for ever is the Self that knows no birth, no death, and that is beyond all limitations.

In the light of all that has been stated to expound the Maharshi's philosophy of spiritual life in collaboration and comparison with modern thought, we are in a position to assume that the Sage of Arunachala is not a dogmatic teacher nor a religious propagandist or a reformer. He is really a spiritual scientist who has adopted the scientific method of approach to Truth by investigating the realm of the Unknown with the aid of his intuitive genius which has assimilated reason. He has attained Self-realisation through his own self-effort and intense introspection. A modern scientist discovers a certain truth not only for himself but for the benefit of the whole of mankind, irrespective of any race or nationality. He shares his knowledge willingly with those who

care for it. Even like the scientist, Sri Maharshi hands over the result of his patient investigation and search to his disciples and earnest students of the subject in order that the torch of spiritual enlightenment may be kept burning from one generation to another.

On this most auspicious and happy occasion commemorating the completion of half a century of the transcendental life of the greatest of the modern Sages of India, we pray to him to vouchsafe his grace to all worthy and deserving persons who seek his inward presence, protection and guidance. We pray that his resplendent grace may shine forth in at least a few disciples who may have been privileged to receive it from him, so that they may attain the peace and light of Self-realization, and carry the Light of Divine Wisdom from generation to generation.



"THERE IS NOTHING. BE!"

Sadhu Arunachala (Major A. W. Chadwick, O.B.E.)

Fifty years is a long time. Wonderful how in these last fifty years the world has rushed on in its mad career of change, faster than ever dreamt of in the whole recorded history of man. Yet this hectic rush has left the Maharshi absolutely untouched, in truth I suppose he has remained quite unconscious of it, for I have often heard him say that the time has passed in a flash.

In many ways these years have been quite uneventful. A few changes of house and diet, a few annoyances from jealous *sadhus*. That is all. All except a reputation that has been steadily growing year by year, till now one can say there is no country where he is unknown and where in some corner or other some devotee cannot be found.

But what strikes one who ponders over the life of Bhagavan is not this wonderful increase in fame and reputation. This was inevitable. The world had been anxiously looking for someone and in answer to all these anxious prayers Bhagavan appeared. It will always be thus. But it is the study in contrasts which is so remarkable.

Bhagavan belonged to a family which was absolutely unknown; he has become world-famous. They were very poor; now people are willing to lay their fortunes at his feet. Orthodox of the orthodox, no foreigner had ever crossed their doorstep, it would be pollution; now Bhagavan sits to eat surrounded by foreigners and members of the depressed classes. And does it all in the most natural way; to the manner born as the expression goes. For him there is no distinction. And in this way he has made himself available to all. To the Brahmins because he is of Brahmin birth, they will rarely sit at the feet of one of another caste, and to the rest of us because of his magnanimity.

For most people it is the arrival of Bhagavan at Tiruvannamalai that we are now celebrating, but for me that is relatively unimportant, and seems to be more the business of the local townsfolk. Wherever he had settled I should have gone, and though one can think of no holier spot than this, it is easy to think of many which would have been far more convenient.

Fifty years ago Bhagavan became a full and perfect *Jnani* once and for all. There were no stages in his attainment. Lying on the floor of the room in his uncle's house he was conscious of the final and absolute death of the ego. He dramatized a fact. In his own words: "Nothing has ever happened to me, I am the same as I always was." Yes, *I am* the same, the essential and eternal "I am", but relatively everything happened at that moment. Then was achieved the summit of attainment that hundreds strive after during many long years of austerities, and even many births. But the ego being dead, there is no one but the "I am" left as a witness, and that must ever remain the one changeless noumenon behind all phenomena.

And the philosophy of this greatest of Sages can be summed up in just three words "There is nothing." So simple and yet so supremely difficult. "There is nothing." All this world that you see, this mad rush of people after money and "existence" is just a fabricless thought. "There is nothing." You as a personality, as a petty entity striving for your own selfish ends, ever seeking so-called "Self-realization" are nothing. You are like the shadow of a leaf cast by the moonlight, intangible, unsubstantial, and in fact non-existent. And as the shadow is a purely negative phenomenon, is in fact nothing but a shutting out of light, so is the ego and everything else, (because everything follows in the train of the ego and is actually a part of it) only a shutting out of the light of the Self.

You may justly turn to me now and ask: "Who wants this purely negative state?"

To which I can only reply: "It is just a question of taste." Though, note you, I have never suggested that Bhagavan ever says that the ultimate state after which, it is presumed, we are all striving *is* negative. On the contrary, when he says: "There is nothing," it is obvious that he is speaking about our present egoistic existence, which for us is everything. But this being nothing there must obviously be a state which is something. That state is Self-realization. Not only is it something but it is EVERYTHING, and being everything then logically and philosophically it must be PERFECT.

"If we are already perfect and there is nothing else, what need is there for us to go to Bhagavan?" you ask.

And this reminds me of a story against myself.

An Australian journalist came to the Ashram, quite why he came is a mystery, I doubt if he would be able to tell himself. Anyhow he did come and in the course of his visit came to see me in my room. It was obvious from the first moment that I was a tremendous problem to him. Why an European should shut himself away in a place like this was beyond his comprehension. He asked many questions but none of my replies satisfied him, how could they? Especially as he had not the first idea of what the Ashram was, or what people were doing here. I didn't even write, then what on earth did I do! At length he could contain himself no longer and bluntly asked me what I was doing here. Now here was a problem to answer. If I had tried to tell him the truth he would never have understood, that I realized, so making the best of it I just said that here I found peace of mind. I knew it was an inadequate answer but hoped it would stave off further enquiries.

He looked at me seriously for a few minutes and then said pityingly: "Oh I see, I have never been troubled in that way myself."

All I had succeeded in doing was in confirming him in the conviction that I was insane. And was there not, after all, some ground for his belief? Here have I been spending ("wasting", he would say) half a life time searching for something I already possess. I know that I possess it too, which makes matters appear worse.

But let us return to the question and admit straightaway that even now I am unable to reply satisfactorily. I can only say why I came and that is because I wanted to. And why do I stay? Because I want to. Doubtless there are many learned writers to this volume who will be able to give philosophical and cast-iron replies to this question, I leave the reader to them. I am not particularly interested. To my metal Bhagavan was a magnet and as yet his magnetism has lost none of its force. I am helpless.

But it is true that the majority of people who come to Bhagavan want something, either material or spiritual. That is why they come and that is why they stay. One hears rumours of miracles performed, I can quote no authentic instances, but why not? Did not another great Sage say that by Faith everything could be achieved, even if one had faith only as large as a grain of sand, one could easily remove mountains. They have the faith and the miracle happens automatically. But those who expect Bhagavan to hand them Self-realization, as if it were some

tangible thing, are surely sadly deluded. How can anybody give one what one has already got? All he can do is help one to remove the ignorance that hides it. It is like going to a lake with a cup and sitting by its side praying to it to fill the cup with water. You may sit there for a thousand years but it is certain that unless you lean forward and dip the cup into the water yourself nothing will happen. Even then you have to make certain that the cup is not already full of a lot of rubbish. Most cups are!

"How then to obtain this perfect state?" You may well ask, "How to empty our cups of rubbish?"

Bhagavan tells us just one other thing. He says: "Be". Just be your real Self, that's all.

"Certainly it sounds all right," you say, "but when one tries to do it, it does not seem so easy. Has he no method?"

Method! Well what exactly do you mean by method? Sitting on the floor and concentrating on the navel? Or blowing the wind out of alternative nostrils? Or repeating some incantation one crore and eight times? No, he hasn't got any method. All these things are no doubt good in their way and help to prepare one, but Bhagavan doesn't happen to teach them. That's all!

"Then what am I to do?"

You must just "BE," he says. And to be you must know the "I that is". To know the "I that is", just go on enquiring "Who am I?" Don't take any notice of anything except the "I", throw everything else away like the rubbish out of the cup. And when you have at last found the "I", BE.

All talk, all empty words. "There's nothing" and that's the end of it. No method, nothing to discard, nothing to find. Nothing at all is except the "I". Why worry about anything else? Just BE, now and always, as you were, as you are, and as you ever will be.

It sounds so easy, doesn't it? Well, Bhagavan says it's the easiest thing there is. I really don't know. To me it seems about the most difficult thing there is. Some books call it the "razor's edge", but I suppose it all really depends on how much rubbish there is in your cup. We're all different anyway and perhaps some of us were handicapped at the start. It's certain that the rubbish has to come out and the coming out process is full of surprises. All kinds of hidden vices and evil tendencies start to pop up their heads which one never suspected were there

at all. But it's all for the good. Bhagavan says they have to come out. But let them come out, not take charge. Don't give way to them. All excellent advice, no doubt. But the practice is not nearly so easy as the preaching.

However, it is not Bhagavan's teaching that is so remarkable. There's nothing new in that. Gaudapada, the Upanishads, you find it all there. And if one gets really down to it there only ever was one teaching. The methods of attainment may have appeared different on the surface but the goal was always the same. No, it's not the teaching. It's he himself. He is a living example of the teaching. And it's much harder to find that than a teacher. There are thousands of teachers. Every other man you meet has a passion for preaching, but there are precious few who ever practise what they preach. And fewer still who attain the goal that they set out for others. There have been many saints before, but one has only read about them. Doubtless many of them were *Jnanis* but *I* haven't any proof of that. It's all just hearsay as far as I am concerned, and it's the same for millions of others. But here before us in Bhagavan we have a living example that such people can and do exist. And this gives me tremendous confidence.

I realize that I have only to strive sincerely and I, too, can reach that vale of peace, where there is no more sorrow or trouble, just because the objective world of sorrow and trouble has entirely ceased to exist.

I see him sitting in the Hall completely detached, entirely unmoved by the happenings which seem so momentous to me, his face wreathed in the most lovely of smiles, and an expression of serenity and beauty on it which it is impossible to describe, or even believe unless you have seen it for yourself. And this is an eternal source of hope and encouragement for me. No books written in the past, no stories of former saints can convey this same message: after all there is always the chance that they may have been frauds. But *this* is absolutely genuine and I am unable to doubt any longer even if I want to. And I suppose that is why people come here and stay. Here we are on the bed-rock of certainty in an ever-changing and uncertain world. Nothing can shake our faith in this as long as we have the living presence here before us.

Methods do not matter, attainment does not matter. Questions disappear, for one gradually begins to realize that there *is* nothing, nothing but He.

"But didn't Maharishi once write some Hymns to Arunachala?" you may ask. "How do you explain this if there is nothing?"

I can't. It is one of those delightful inconsistencies that one must expect to find among *Jnanis*. He says there's nothing and yet writes hymns to God. But you surely don't expect a *Jnani* to be cut to your pattern, do you? Who are you to be able to say whether a thing is consistent or inconsistent? Yours is such a narrow, relative point of view, while his is the Absolute, Universal point of view. There can be no comparison. Anyhow ask him, I can't explain it. But then I don't much want to. The Hymns are beautiful and he wrote them. Surely that is enough!

"But just one more question. Why did he move, why did he come to Arunachala?"

I can't say, but if you were to ask him he would probably say he has never gone anywhere. He is where he always was. Not a very satisfactory answer from our point of view. But from his the only one. He would also probably say there is only one point of view, the others do not exist, and leave you to work it out for yourself. The fact is undoubtedly that for us he did come and we are now celebrating his arrival. And, truly, Tiruvannamalai has been blessed by his presence, and all of us who have had the good fortune to sit at his feet. I doubt if we realize how lucky we are. One is inclined to get used to things and take them for granted. That is the nature of the ego. But there's no taking Bhagavan for granted, he is always surprisingly different, and that is one of the great wonders of his presence.

But, gentle reader, these are only random thoughts. I am not trying to interpret Bhagavan for you or explain his philosophy. That is far beyond me.

The only person who can write about Bhagavan is the person who really knows him, and the only person who really knows him is Bhagavan himself. And it is perfectly certain that Bhagavan will never write about himself.

You say: "If there's nothing, why write?"

Yes, why? The whole thing can be summed up in four words: 'There is nothing. Be!" When one understands those four words one understands everything including Bhagavan, himself.

Then there is no more to say.

SRI RAMANA
THE SAGE OF PEACE

By

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., LL.D.

It is natural to believe in great men; and in the language of Emerson the search after the great is the dream of youth and the most serious occupation of manhood. The same philosopher dealing with representative men insisted that in order best to fulfil his functions, the great man must be related to us and our life should receive from him some promise of expansion. He added that there are persons who, either by their character or by their actions, answer questions which we have not the skill to put.

Outlining the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Romain Rolland emphasises that the first qualification for knowing, judging, and even for condemning a religion or a philosophy, is to have made experiments for oneself in that field; and in this connection it cannot be forgotten that even many persons who sincerely think that they are free from all religious beliefs actually live, as has been stated, "immersed in a state of super-rational consciousness which some term socialism, others communism, others again nationalism or humanitarianism". The test that has been suggested for passing a verdict in this matter has been thus expressed: If one turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs and prepared for any sacrifice, he should be called religious. For, religion is definitely the faith in an end to human efforts higher than the individual life or even the life of the existing society.

In India, as Swami Vivekananda has asserted, all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence. For nearly four thousand years what Romain Rolland calls the tree of vision has renewed itself tirelessly; all kinds of fruits ripen upon its boughs at the same time; always side by side are found all kinds of Godheads from the lowest to the highest,

to the unnamable and the boundless One. India has also produced throughout the ages a series of pathfinders or universal souls. The tree of vision has been aptly described in the Upanishads and in the Gita as the Eternal *Asvattha*, whose roots are in the sky and whose branches pervade the earth.

The world abounds with scriptures, revelations and philosophies all of which seek to expound the truth; but although this truth is one and eternal, it expresses itself in time and through the mind of man; and therefore, as Sri Aurobindo has stated, every scripture and revelation contains two elements, one temporary, perishable, belonging to the ideas of the period and the country in which it was produced; the other applicable to all ages and countries.

I have deliberately adverted, by way of introduction, to Swami Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh as men whose lives and teachings afford both an analogy and a contrast to the life-work of Ramana Maharshi. It is a daring task that I have attempted in discussing one with whom I have not come in direct contact and of whom all I have learnt is through his teachings, and conversations with those who have been profoundly influenced by him. Sankara in his *Viveka-Choodamani* claims that there are three things which are rare and due to the Grace of God, namely, to be born a human being, to long for liberation and to obtain counsel from a perfected sage. Not only in our scriptures but right through the ages, the *Guru* and the *Sishya* are pre-ordained for each other and one seeks the other out, as Socrates did Plato. My only explanation and position is that such a call is essential and cannot be anticipated or forced.

The Maharshi's life is without many outward incidents but it is a life dedicated from the beginning to realisation and an insistent and absorbed search directed to *vairagya* and God-quest. Renunciation, realisation and the power that comes from both, seem to have been the prerogatives of the Maharshi from his early youth. The Hindu ideal has always been in favour of teaching through life and not so much through words and the Maharshi is described as being always in *Sahaja Samadhi*, an uninterrupted state of realisation, being able to attend to any work that turns up without feeling disturbed or distracted. As is stated of Dakshinamurti, it is said of Maharshi that he teaches more by silence than by sermons.

India has never committed the mistake of an over-stressing of the reality of the world and its phenomena and strata, and the West is fast arriving at the same conclusion. Sir James Jeans says with reference to Einstein's theories: "We find that space means nothing apart from our perception of objects and time means nothing apart from our experience of events. Space begins to appear as a fiction created by our minds." "Matter," in the language of Bertrand Russell, "has become as ghostly as anything in a spiritualist *seance*". This consciousness, now fortified by the researches of physical and chemical science, has been the fundamental concept of Indian religious teachers who have always regarded the world as unreal and ever-changing. In order to illustrate Maharshi's catholic approach towards the great problems in life, let me quote two questions and answers set out in the *Maharshi's Gospel, Book I.*

"*D.* How does a *Grihastha* fare in the scheme of *moksha*? Should he not necessarily become a mendicant in order to attain Liberation?

"*M.* Why do you think you are a *Grihastha*? Similar thoughts that you are a *Sannyasin* will haunt you, even if you go out as a *Sannyasin.* Whether you continue in the household or renounce it and go to the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thought. It creates the body and the world, and it makes you think of being the *Grihastha*. If you renounce, it will only substitute the thought of *Sannyasa* for that of *Grihastha*, and the environment of the forest for that of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there for you. They even increase greatly in the new surroundings. It is no help to change the environment The one obstacle is the mind; it must be got over whether in the home or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? Therefore, why change the environment? Your efforts can be made even now, whatever be the environment.

"*D.* Is it possible to enjoy *Samadhi* while busy in worldly work?

"*M.* The feeling 'I work' is the hindrance. Ask yourself 'Who works?' Remember who you are. Then the work will not bind you; it will go on automatically. Make no effort either to work or to renounce; your effort is the bondage. What is destined to happen will happen. If you are destined not to work, work cannot be had even if

you hunt for it; if you are destined to work, you will not be able to avoid it; you will be forced to engage yourself in it. So, leave it to the Higher Power; you cannot renounce or retain as you choose."

It is a remarkable proof of the unifying faculty of the Maharshi's personality that he had gathered around him men of varying equipment and experience as Aksharajna, B. V. Narasimha Swami, Grant Duff and Suddhananda Bharathi. In the book entitled "Self-Realisation-Life and Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi" Narasimha Swami has furnished an absorbingly interesting pen-picture of his daily life, his remarkable encounter with thieves and his sympathy for and brotherliness towards men and animals alike. The Maharshi has sedulously avoided publicity and controversies, social or religious. Many persons who have visited the Ashram have recounted their experiences, one of which is typical. Pascaline Mallet in her book *Turn Eastwards* speaks of a central figure, whose serene strength and perfect poise seem to fill the whole place with unutterable peace. Paul Brunton speaks in his *A Search in Secret India* of a silent figure on a couch and his strange reception, ostensibly characterised by indifference. Let me quote his own words: "My initial bewilderment, my perplexity at being totally ignored, slowly fade away as this strange fascination begins to grip me more firmly. But it is not till the second hour of the uncommon scene that I become aware of the silent, resistless change which is taking place within my mind. One by one, the questions which I prepared in the train with such meticulous accuracy drop away. For it does not now seem to matter whether they are asked or not, and it does not matter whether I solve the problems, which have hitherto troubled me. I know only that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, that a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being, and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest.

"How small seem those questions which I have asked myself with such frequency! How petty grows the panorama of the lost years! I perceive with sudden clarity that the intellect creates its own problems and then makes itself miserable trying to solve them. This is indeed a novel concept to enter the mind of one who has hitherto placed such high value upon intellect."

The Maharshi has not written much; but what he has told us in his "*Ulladu Narpadu or Sad-Vidya*" is a pithy synopsis of what is

usually termed Vedantic teaching. Translating the Swamiji's "*Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala*", Grant Duff positively avers that he felt that he was in direct contact with one who had passed beyond the boundaries of the senses and was merged in the Absolute of his true Self. The Hymns are the efflorescence of the mystic urge and the Maharshi speaks of a Heart which is different from the physical one but whose secrets have to be learnt in order to discard that "self which is the aggregate of sense impressions." It has always been one of the fundamentals of Hindu life and faith that those who wish to be free must, in the language of the Gita, seek and reverently question those who have seen the truth and freed themselves. Speaking of the necessity of a *Guru*, the Maharshi himself was asked by some one as to whether the belief in the necessity of a *Guru* is correct. He gave the following reply: "So long as one thinks of himself as little—*laghu*, he must take hold of the great—the *Guru*; he must not however look upon the *Guru* as a person; the Sage is never other than the real Self of the disciple. When that Self is realised then there is neither *Guru* nor disciple". The question arose because the Sage himself had had no *Guru*,—at least no outer *Guru*. On another occasion the Sage said: "A teacher would be needed if one has to learn something new; but this is a case of unlearning".

On another occasion the Sage said: "When camphor burns, no residue is left. The mind must be like camphor; it must melt away and be wholly consumed by the earnest Resolve to find and be the real Self; by this resolve the 'Who am I?' Quest becomes efficacious. When the mind is thus consumed, when no trace of it as mind is left—it has become resolved into the Self."

Being asked how one can find his *Guru* the Sage said: "By intense meditation."

One of his disciples, Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, has given the Sanscrit redaction of *Sri Ramana Gita*, which embodies the fundamentals of the Sage's Teachings; and various collections have been published both in Tamil and in Sanscrit, outlining his teaching and precepts. All of them are characterised by directness of approach and facility of expression that comes from Enlightenment. Loving disciples have gathered and collected every saying of his. His daily life and the calm that characterises it, and that is diffused by it in his environment have been

actually described as matters of daily experience. One like me, who has, up to now, not experienced personal contact with this remarkable personage, can only say that all that he has learnt of and read about him, furnishes proof that we are face to face with one of those beings who having embarked on the eternal quest of the human soul has not only attained the peace of realisation but is able to communicate that peace to those around him.

TO

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA

The Leonine Power *

Oh Flaming Lion, Stern, Majestic, Holy,
Who can approach, yet who escape Thy Paws
Oh Sovereign Lord, to be Thy sport is jolly,
For after Sport I dine in Nectarine Jaws!

Yet spare me not, my Lord, destroy me all,
Lest slipping Thee I suffer shameful fall!

—C. S. BAGI, M. A.,
Vice-Principal,
Lingaraj College, Belgaum.

* Suggested by the concluding part of Prof. K. Swaminathan's contribution to the Golden Jubilee Souvenir, the poem entitled SRI RAMANA, THE SELF SUPREME, and by Sri Chinta Dikshitulu's article entitled "O BHAGAVAN!"

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA THE TYPICAL RISHI

By

A. S. **Panchapagesa Ayyar**, M.A., I.C.S., BAR-AT-LAW, F.R.S.L.

Hinduism is quite different from the other great religions of mankind in that it has not been *founded* by any one teacher or prophet. Thus, Islam has been founded by Muhammad, Christianity by Jesus, Zoroastrianism by Zoroaster, and Buddhism by Buddha; but Hinduism has no known founder, and has, like a great river, a natural growth. It is something like the Tungabhadra, whose origin is just a drop of water continually flowing from each nostril of a giant image-like boulder, called Roopnarayan. These drops become small streams, each a yard broad, one furlong from the source, and, ultimately become the mighty Tunga and Bhadra combining into the famous Tungabhadra River, now about to be harnessed to irrigate a million acres. Hinduism has, from its small origins, several millenniums ago, developed into the mighty river of to-day. Like the Tungabhadra too, it has got two streams, the Aryan, coming from the right nostril of the Vedas and the Ganges, and the Dravidian, coming from the left nostril of the Siddhantas and the Indus. Hinduism is both the product of the land of the Vedas and of the men of Mohen-jo-Daro. Now, like the Tunga and the Bhadra, after their confluence, and the Ganges, after the confluence of the Jamuna with it, it is impossible to separate, or even to distinguish, the two streams.

It follows, from the nature of its origin itself, that Hindüism started not as a complete system, like Islam or Christianity, and that it has been developed from age to age by the teachings of *Avataras*, *Rishis* and *Bhashyakaras*, by the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Puranas*, *Brahmasutras* and *Dharma Sastras* and by the teachings of Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa, Vallabha, Chaitanya and the other eminent teachers of the *Adwaita*, *Dwaita*, *Vishishtadwaita*, *Suddhadwaita* and *Dwaita-Adwaita*, schools. All these have contributed to the making of the structure now known as Hindusim, let alone the doctrines of the *Sankha*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Purvamimamsa* and *Uttara-*

mimamsa schools, and of Buddhism, Jainism and Materialism. Not only the Vedanta philosophers but also Buddha, Mahavira and Charvaka have contributed to Hinduism which, like a mighty river, has received waters from all sides. The greatest contribution to the creation and preservation of Hinduism has, of course, been made by the *Rishis* and Sages.

The Bhagavad Gita has clearly stated in chapter IV, that Truth is eternal, and that it is proclaimed afresh from age to age, when it has become lost, owing to lapse of time. So, Krishna came to fulfil, not to destroy, even as Christ and Muhammad came. It is because of this peculiar feature of Hinduism that *Rishis* and Sages are so necessary for its very existence and growth so that the old truths may be preached anew by new men living the lives they advocate. *Anubhava* (actual experience) and *Darsana* (Vision of the Supreme) are essential for Teachers of religion, according to the Hindus. That is why India, the Home of Hinduism, has produced a never-ending series of *Rishis* and Saints, like the eternal snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas, while it has egregiously failed to produce great soldiers like Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Napoleon, Chengiz Khan and Tamerlane, or industrialists like Rockfeller, Henry Ford and Carnegie, or imperialists like Chatham, Pitt and Churchill. One of the cardinal teachings of Hinduism is the divinity of man which, in its philosophy, does not detract from the unity of God. In the famous *Vibhuti Yoga* of the Bagavad Gita, it is clearly enunciated that God is the beginning, the middle and the end of all things, animate and inanimate, and that there is not a single atom, or disintegrated atom in the whole universe, without being pervaded by Him. His all-pervasiveness is something mysterious, being not merely like the salt pervading water, since the salt particles may be isolated, but He cannot be. It is not like the water soaking the earth, as water and earth may be separated, but not He and His creation. What is more, having pervaded the entire universe with a fraction of Himself, He remains entire, contrary to all the solemn teachings of human mathematics. He is full always; the best of Saints, like Prahlada or Narada, cannot add to that fullness, the worst of demons, like Ravana and Kamsa, cannot detract from that fullness. So, man cannot enhance His glory by his good deeds; nor can he detract from His glory by his bad deeds.

For the guidance of man, and for that alone, and not as an absolute statement of truth, the *Vedas* have divided God into three aspects, the *Immanent*, or the one-fourth immersed in the universe, the

Transcendent, or the three-fourths left outside the universe, and the *Emergent*, or *Avataras*, like that of Sri Krishna, when the three-fourths and one-fourth combine to make the whole, for the benefit of mankind. So too, religion has been simplified by the Hindus by stating that it is only the three-fold formula of *Brahma*, *Dharma* and *Karma*. Man has to do *Karma* (work), and go along the path of *Dharma* (righteousness) and attain *Brahma* (God). Hinduism emphasised *Brahma* who could cancel both *Dharma* and *Karma*, whereas Buddhism emphasised *Dharma* and Jainism emphasised *Karma*. Hindus who emphasised *Brahma* stated that He was *Satyam* (Truth), *Jnanam* (Knowledge)· *Anandam* (Bliss), *Sakshi* (Witness), *Nirguna* (the Absolute devoid of qualities) and *Advaita* (one and only one). Devotees are advised to hear the proclamation of His greatness, in the *Vedas*, *Sastras* and *Puranas* and in the words of Saints, and to *acquiesce* in it, till they are made to *accept* it, by their own realisation; in other words, proclamation, acquiescence, and acceptance are the three steps.

Every man is *unique*, because he is unlike every other man in the whole universe, having special gifts and aptitudes of his own, derived from God's infinite resources. He is also *universal* as, otherwise, he cannot understand his fellow-men. Both this uniqueness and this universality are imbedded in the *eternal*, which is both unique and universal. So God has got, in Hinduism, not only the universal aspect, common to all, as in other religions, but He has also got His unique aspect for each man, leading to the *Ishtadevata* doctrine, or worshipping that aspect of God most conducive for the individual's spiritual development. The *Sahasranamas* of different deities are intended to cultivate this uniqueness which leads, in its turn, to universalness, which leads, in its turn, to the eternal. That is why Krishna had no difficulty in proclaiming that any worship offered to any *deity* is only worship offered to Him, and that whoever wants to meet Him, He meets halfway. The tolerance of Hinduism is, therefore, inherent in its very nature and follows from its natural hypothesis. No wonder, then, that among the Hindus, there are many devout admirers of Jesus and Muhammad, let alone Buddha, Mahavira and others.

In this process of interpreting the true doctrines of Hinduism, which is not a religion of dogmas and precepts and periodical observances, but *a way of life pervading all its aspects*, Sages have to exist to show the way to laymen by life and precept. Here, too, the peculiar

genius of Hinduism has made it reconcile the apparently diametrically opposite methods of evolution and revolution. On the side of evolution, we have got the regular schools of philosophy, and the great *Mutts* of the *Adwaita*, *Dwaita*, *Vishishtadwaita*, *Dwaitadwaita* and *Suddhadwaita* schools scattered all over India, from Kashmir to Cape Comorin, from Assam to Sind. But Hinduism never forgot the lesson of history, that evolution, by itself, is not enough, and that revolution is needed, sometimes, to supplement it, for preserving the health and promoting the growth. God, in the Bible, has stated, "I will overturn, overturn, and overturn till everything is set right." The Hindus have embodied this truth also as a fundamental part of their daily routine. *Sannyasis* and *Rishis* defy all conventions, and experiment always, by overturning established customs, whereas *Mathadhipatis* and *Jagadgurus* uphold such customs, thus forming the other half of the circle. So, while the *Jagadgurus* will be upholding the caste system, and untouchability, unapproachability and even unseeability, the *Sannyasis* and Sages, like Sri Ramana, refuse to recognise distinctions of caste, creed, colour, class, race, sex or country. Both have their uses, and Hinduism, by its trinity of Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Siva, the destroyer, has recognised the equality of creation, preservation and destruction. It has no sympathy for out-worn beliefs any more than for dilapidated buildings, and will mercilessly destroy them for leaving the path free for creation of new and better structures. On the other hand, it will preserve every structure so long as it deserves to be preserved. This, naturally, is a combination of the methods of evolution and revolution. The man of the world, superior or inferior, goes by the path of evolution. The man of the other world, called *Jeevanmukta*, adopts, indifferently, the path of evolution or the path of revolution, as it suits him. Thus, God says that, for the *Jeevanmukta*, what is night for the common man is day and what is day for the common man is night; wealth and pleasure, which attract the common man, have no attraction for the Sage; truth, love and justice to which the layman does but lip-service are the life-breath of the Sage.

Sri Ramana, the Sage, has, in his own life, defied conventions several times. When he left his family on his fateful journey to Thiruvannamalai, he took with him, for his railway fare, three rupees given to him for paying his brother's college fees, and displayed an utter disregard for the middle-class conventions regarding money matters, even as Lord Sri Krishna, when stealing butter, showed similar disregard.

Indeed, an English lady of high culture, one day, told me that she could not regard Sri Ramana as a Sage because of his 'misappropriation' of these three rupees. I shall not be surprised if there are thousands of Pharisees of that type even among Indians. So too, one of my orthodox Brahmin friends was scandalised on hearing that Sri Ramana would not eat anything till his mother died, and that he ate to the full the moment she died. His conventional mind could not understand the feelings of the Sage who could not eat while his mother was suffering agony but could eat the moment her soul was released from the body. Again, a police friend of mine was shocked at the refusal of Sri Ramana to give a complaint, or even to give evidence, regarding the theft of some vessels belonging to his *Ashram* by some members of the criminal tribe. Sri Ramana refused to believe that the vessels belonged to him any more than to those thieves. The policeman exclaimed indignantly to me that it would be the end of the world, forgetting that the world has not come to an end yet.

I was first attracted to this great Sage by reading his book, "Who Am I?" I liked immensely his clear exposition of the matter which was only the typical Hindu exposition, viz., that the real "I" is not the gunny-bag of the body, or the Decca muslin of the mind, or the spider's web of the ego, but something above and beyond all this viz., the Atman. or God-Immanent. It appears to be at first sight curious that any person, least of all a Sage, should ask the elementary question "Who am I?", when everybody knows himself best, being always with himself and loving himself most. But, as is well-known, the most familiar thing is the most unexplored. Once Sri Ramana's small book on this subject is read in its proper setting, the difficulty of the problem will become apparent, and one will realise that one is not the *sthulasareera* nor the *sukshmasareera* nor even *karanasareera* but only the Atman or pure Consciousness. If a man is simply the body, he must say, when he is being taken away after losing his legs, "Three-fourths "I" am going leaving one-fourth "I" behind", as his legs represent one-fourth of his body. But he says, "*I* am going after losing my legs", and we, the bystanders, also say, "*he* is going after losing his legs", thus showing that the body is not the real self. If the mind were the real self, a man waking up from dreamless sleep or from a comatic stage of unconsciousness, when the mind is wiped out for all practical purposes, will not say "*I* had a dreamless sleep", or "*I* was in a comatic stage of unconsciousness", nor will bystanders say "He ceased to exist during sleep" etc. Nor is his ego the

real self; if it were, nobody would condemn himself inwardly, or be willing to die for something outside himself. But there is not a single human being in the whole world who will not die for something outside him. Englishmen will die to defend their country from invasion; Americans will die to keep the world markets free; Russians will die to preserve Communism; Hindus will die to prevent interference with their orthodox customs; and Muslims will die in defence of their mosques. The famous passage in the Upanishads "*neti, neti, neti*" (not this, not this, not this) means simply that the Self is not the body, not the mind, not the ego. It is not born, like the body, nor does it die. It is not gross, and it does not require food, water and air like the body. It is not subtle and cunning, like the mind. It is not cruel and selfish and given over to pride, power, lust, fear, wrath and greed, like the ego. It is unborn, eternal, indestructible, infinite, invulnerable, incombustible, insoluble, all-pervasive, and above the three *gunas*.

Sri Ramana has consistently upheld, like all great Hindu Saints, that the real self is always happy, and that the theory of original sin and original sorrow is not acceptable to Hinduism. It is obvious that every man is after happiness, that being the universal goal. One wants a good-looking wife, in order to be happy; another wants a crore of rupees, again, to be happy; a third wants power, like Hitler and Mussolini, once more, to be happy; a fourth wants to do humanitarian work, again, to be happy; a fifth wants to commit suicide, again only to be happy, as he is unhappy now and wants to get rid of his present existence in order to be happy. From the Hindu theory of inherent Divinity of man, it is obvious that sin is not his original or ultimate nature, but only something which has come in adventitiously, like dust on a mirror or smoke in fire, something which can be wiped out. Death is not the wages of sin, but only a tunnel to facilitate the progress of the soul; just as no train will ever stop in a tunnel for good, no life will ever end in death for good.

God, too, has four bodies. His *Sthulasareera* is the universe or universes. God is not extinguished by their dissolution or disappearance, any more than man is killed by his hair being cut, or a land destroyed by cutting the trees or crops on it, or a spider by destroying the threads woven by it. Indeed, the *Purusha* extends beyond the universe, on every side, according to the *Purushasukta* of the *Rig Veda*. That is the answer to atheists who blindly rely on Einstein's theory of the limited universe for disproving the existence of the Supreme Being. That uni-

verse is, of course, limited and finite. That does not affect the infinite nature of the Lord. In a minor way, the temples, mosques, churches and synagogues are also God's *Sthulasareera*. Destruction of these will not affect Him, as the universe, like the human body, is only a temple of God. God's *sukshmasareera* consists of the scriptures, the *Vedas*, the *Koran* the *Bible*, the *Zend Avesta*, the *Tripitakas*, the Jain scriptures etc. Even if all these were destroyed, He will remain, just as He remained before they came into being. Hindus believe that the Vedas are the breathing-out of Brahman. It is obvious that Brahman was even before He breathed out, and remains entire and infinite even after they have been breathed out, and will remain so even if they are ultimately lost to mankind. An atheist once told a Sage, 'I cannot believe anything I cannot see. I cannot see God. So, I take it that he does not exist." Quick came the retort, " I cannot see your brains. May I take it that you have none ?"

God's apparent *Karanasareera* (it can, of course, not be real, since God can never have egoism) is seen in *Avataras* like those of Rama, Krishna and Christ, where Ravana, Kamsa and the Jews were opposed to them, and considered them to be egoistic, and foolishly or wickedly ignored them in human form, and came to ruin. It is just a folly of theirs, this attribution of egoism to an *Avatara*, something like a boy travelling in a motor car at night imputing fiery eyes to bullocks coming opposite, forgetting that the eyes are devoid of fiery nature, and that it is the motor car's head-lights which make them appear to be so. The fact remains, however, that these enemies of the *Avataras* thought so, and worshipped God, as it were, over the heads of the *Avataras*. Even now, many Non-Jews consider Jehovah to be God of the Jews; many non-Christians consider Christ to be God of the Christians; many non-Muslims consider Allah to be God of the Muslims; and many non-Hindus consider Krishna to be God of the Hindus. This attribution of egoism to God is not yet gone. Unfortunately it persists still, and is not a mere phenomenon of the past. Nay, even among the Hindus Siva is considered to be God of Saivites by Sri-Vaishnavites, and Krishna is considered to be God of the Vaishnavites by Veerasaivas, as if there can be rival Gods with independent jurisdictions!

Of course, beyond and above these three bodies of God, is the fourth and real body, Purushottama, God Immanent yet Transcendent, Emergent yet Unchanging and Eternal.

There is a lot of prejudice among Westerners against the Hindu custom of regarding Sri Ramana or Sri Aurobindo or Sri Sai Baba as *Bhagavan*, or God. Our Muslim friends too object to associating anyone with God. The misunderstanding arises largely because of the imperfect understanding of the Hindu attitude, which does not see any breach in the unity of God by regarding these highly evolved men as *Vibhutis* of God. There is nothing really incongruous in this, any more than in the case of a judge or a magistrate issuing the King's writ. "Bhagavan" means "the worshipful one" or "man of divine qualities," and even the Emperor Asoka refers to the Buddha, who never claimed to be God, as "Bhagavan."

The prejudice against repetition of truths by the Hindu Sages is equally unwarranted.[1] We repeat to a child, pointing out a cow, "cow, cow", in order to impress it upon the young mind; how much more repetition would be necessary for making difficult philsophical and religious conceptions sink into the mind of man! Even with these repetitions, these critics will be hard put to it to explain the truth expounded in them. The repetition of truths is as necessary for the preservation of Truth as the repetition of breaths is for the preservation of life.

The Maharshi has got a very convincing method of expounding truths and silencing frivolous arguments. Thus, one of his cardinal tenets is: "*There is One Who governs the world, and it is His lookout to look after the world. He Who has given life to the World knows to look after it also. He bears the burden of this world, not you.*" A man who had suffered much by the buffetings of the world went to him, one day, and complained that God was not bearing his burden for him, as stated by the Maharshi. The Maharshi asked him how he had come to Tiruvannamalai. The man replied that he had come by train. Then he was asked if he had brought any luggage. The man replied that he had taken a steel trunk. The Maharshi asked him if he had carried it on

[1] This attitude of non-relish to hear the Truth repeated betrays only the hearer's un-ripeness and total want of earnestness to know the Truth. A classic example of this type is Hriday, the relative-attendant of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Hearing young Ramakrishna repeating the same maxims again and again to the visitors, Hriday spoke derisively of the Master's way of instruction. From this distance in time we now see that the "disease" lay in Hriday's mind and had nothing to do with the Master's way of instructing the earnest aspirants.

his head or lap, and was told, indignantly, "Of course not. I put it in the compartment." Then, the Maharshi asked him, "Why carry your troubles and worries on your head and lap, instead of putting them on God?"

To another individual, who asked the Maharshi persistently "Why is God so unjust, so imperfect?" the Maharshi's cool retort was, "Why ask me? Go and ask Him". On being told that he could not go to Him, to ask Him, that swift retort came, "Then, when you cannot reach Him, how can you question Him? Salvation is not for the weak."

A man went and asked him where his deceased sister had been reborn. The Maharshi requested him not to bother about such things, as they were only manifestations of his ego. The man persisted in saying that it was a quest for knowledge, pure and simple, devoid of the least egoism. The Maharshi asked him, "Was she born first only as your sister?" On being told that she must have had thousands of births before, he asked him if he had ever cared to find out what she had been born as, before she was born as his sister. On his replying that he did not, the Maharshi said, "Do you not see that it is only your egoism which has prompted your questions, and not any desire for knowledge pure and simple?"

To a man who stated that he could not understand the world at all, Sri Ramana replied, "As you are, so is this world. Without understanding yourself, what is the use of trying to understand the world? People waste their energies over all such questions. First, find out the truth behind yourself; then, you will be in a better position to understand the truth behind the world, of which yourself is a part."

At times specific and controversial issues are raised by visitors. Some years ago a man wanted to know from Maharshi as to who was right in the Guruvayur Temple—Entry Satyagraha, the *Sanatanists* or *Satyagrahis.* The Sage replied that both were wrong; the Satyagrahis, because they wanted to force open the house of God, and the Sanatanists because they wanted to monopolise to themselves the house of God. To a critic who attacked the visions of some devotees, of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, as only the projections of their own ideas, derived from temple sculptures and idols, the Maharshi remarked that, if the realities corresponded with the ideas, the visions could not have been

otherwise. The above are only a few instances to show the extraordinary originality and acumen of the Sage when he condescends to reply to questions which from his point of view are worthless.

The Maharshi's life is one long "sacrifice of knowledge", by disseminating it to all and sundry. Any one can go and sit near him, invited or uninvited. Anyone can partake of the homely meal in the *Ashram*, whether native or foreigner, caste or outcaste. The Maharshi does not compel interdining, any more than he compels intermarriage. He believes in divine liberty, equality and fraternity, but not in the pinchbeck liberty, equality and fraternity preached by the political charlatans out to exploit others. He has things served by Brahmins and non-Brahmins alike, and has not the least tinge of caste, creed, colour, race, class, sex or country in him. He has not only sacrificed all ideas of private possession in his supreme attempt at possessing the soul, he has sacrificed even the privacy of time. He sits, day in and day out, in that little hall of his, and even sleeps in the presence of all. He is a sublime example of what a Sage ought to be. He has never known the hold of lust for woman or money (*kamini* or *kanchanam*, to use the expressive words of Sri Ramakrishna) and is a perfect *Brahmachari*. He is an embodiment of the Hindu truth that *Karma, Jnana* and *Bhakti* are all one, and that man can attain God, even in this life, the progress being from *historic immediacy*, when man goes to a temple or mosque or church, or reads the scriptures, to *poetic intimacy*, as when he goes, into *Samadhi* and communes with God, alone, and to *scientific identity* when he can exclaim, "He and I are one." But he does not claim any occult powers, though he may possess them. He does not believe in disciples. though many claim to be his disciples. He does not advise practice of *Yoga*, or even silence, though he has practised both. From concentrating on silence, as a *Muni*, he has begun to teach, as a *Rishi*. He has clearly taught people who go to him, that the Hindu principle "I am He" applies only to the Atman, and not to the threefold, *sareera*, *sthula*, *sukshma* and *karana*. That is why he is so passionately earnest in asking the thousands of his visitors to pursue the enquiry "WHO AM I?"

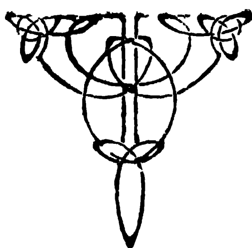
Some may wonder what use there is for Saints like these in an age of science like ours. They know not what they are asking. Science cannot explain why salt is saltish, or sugar is sugarish; why the universe exists, and why man is born here. It is only philosophy and metaphysics which can do that, through Sages like Sri Ramana. As Sir Ray Lankes-

ter says, in his *Science from an Easy Chair*, " The whole order of nature, including living and lifeless matter, from man to gas, is a network of mechanism, the main features and many details of which have been made more or less obvious to the wondering intelligence of mankind by the labour and ingenuity of scientific investigators. But no same man has ever pretended, since science became a definite body of doctrine, that we know, or ever can hope to know, or conceive of the possibility of knowing, whence this mechanism has come, why it is there, whither it is going and what there may or may not be beyond and beside it which our senses are incapable of appreciating. These things are not " explained " to us by science, and never can be." Sages do what scientists cannot. Sri Ramana once had an experience resembling death. He survived, and discovered that the spiritual heart was on the right side of the chest. Sages can go into *samadhi*, hold their breaths for days together, and take their minds in a trice away from the work-a-day world to God. They can bring peace to troubled souls by their mere presence, and send spiritual waves of *santi* (peace) to those whose minds are in agony and approach them. Compared with these waves, the wireless waves and the emanations from the atom bomb are merely children's toys. Sages love all alike. Sri Ramana fondles squirrels, which approach him fearlessly and feed from his hands. He says to one and all, ' Look within. Don't look round. You can do it anywhere." That ought to warn foolish critics.

The paths that lead to God are as different and innumerable as the paths of the animals on land, the fishes in water; and the birds in air. Man born pure in his first birth, acquires impurities in the middle period and has to get rid of them, to reach God again, just as a spark of fire has to get rid of its ashes in oder to become fire again. With the help of the evolution in previous births, and the grace of God, he can accomplish this, but only by being reborn in bodies, just as electric light can only be manifested and perfected in bulbs. To ask why God, Who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, should not save man without all this trouble, is as foolish as the French lady's remark, on ascertaining, from some English people playing foot-ball, that the object was to get the ball through the goal, " You will do it much better if you do not obstruct one another." In this difficult progress to salvation, it is obvious that man will require many births, to wipe out his debt of sin, incurred in between, just as a national debt has to be paid out in several generations and cannot be paid out in one. It is equally obvious

that, just as a skilled financier is required to direct the nation's finances, and create surpluses to pay off the debt and secure redemption, so too, individuals will require a man of God, like Sri Ramana Maharshi, to guide them, to enable them to increase their merit and decrease their demerit, and secure redemption. No wonder, then that men of diverse temperaments have been flocking to Ramanasram, to see the Sage and profit by his presence and by his instruction. For fifty years he has been there, doing this work of God.

We, in our age, are lucky in having him in our midst. I have no reason to believe that *Rishis* of old were very different from Sri Ramana and Sri Aurobindo of to-day. Once we get rid of the illusion caused by the cobwebs of time, the similarity will become striking. It will be a pity to waste anything in the world of to-day; it will be a thousand pities if a spiritual dynamo, like that of Sri Ramana, is not utilised to its fullest extent by Indians and others. He requires no permission; he charges no fee; he does not require conformity to any dogma or even acceptance of him as a *Rishi*. He is, like the rivers and mountains, the common property of mankind. He, like them, is for all the world to visit, enjoy, and profit from.



THE MESSAGE OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA

By

Sri Swami Rajeswarananda

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The intellect cannot understand how it becomes possible to realise the non-dual Self while yet tenanting a body. Still more difficult it is to reconcile the fact of Self-realisation with the continuance of the physical body. But that only shows how poor an instrument the intellect turns out to be, when it oversteps the bounds of the empirical. The heart has its reasons which the intellect cannot understand. The authentic evidence for Liberation-in-life (*Jivanmukti*) provided by the experience of those rare souls who have broken through the bonds of finitude cannot be ignored or set aside. Sankara says in his commentary on the *Vedanta-sutra*, "There is no need to dispute, whether the knower of Brahman bears the body for some time or not. How can another object to one's own experience, realised in the heart, of Brahman-knowledge as well as continuance of the body?" In these words the great *Advaita*-teacher gives expression to his conviction of *Jivanmukti*, the state which he himself had attained. And in our own day, Sri Ramana Maharshi stands as an eloquent witness to the reality of such an experience. From his abode at Arunachala, he blazons forth to humanity the path of light which leads to Immortality and everlasting Bliss.

To the sceptic who ask, "What difference is there between the Maharshi and any of us? He too eats and sleeps, laughs and speaks," no reply could be given. The question itself is irrelevant, because it has no bearing on Self-realisation. *Moksha* does not mean a change in the normal modes of physical behaviour. It only means of realisation of one's eternal nature as the non-dual Self. Arjuna betrayed only his ignorance when he asked Krishna: "What is the mark of a *Sthita-prajna*, one who has a steadied mind, and is established in *Samadhi*?

How does the man of stable mind speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?" In his reply the Lord of the *Gita* does not refer to the *Sthitaprajna's* food or posture or gait, but gives a glorious description of the God-realised soul as one who is firmly established in Wisdom and is above the passions and storms of temporal existence. He says, "Arjuna, when one abandons completely all the cravings of the mind, and is satisfied in the Self through the Self, then he is called a *Sthitaprajna.*" We who presume to judge the *Jnani* from the side of the world are in the same predicament as Arjuna was in. We are inquisitive to know whether he experiences the world or not, and if he does, how he is different from us. To a questioner who asked, "Is the world perceived after Self-realisation?" the Maharshi once replied, "Why worry yourself about the world and what happens to it after Self-realisation? First realize the Self. What does it matter if the world is perceived or not. Do you gain anything to help you in your quest by the non-perception of the world during sleep? Conversely, what would you lose now by the preception of the world? It is quite immaterial to the *Jnani* or *ajnani* if he perceives the world or not. It is seen by both, but their points of view differ." What, then, is the difference between the *Jnani* and *ajnani?* The Maharshi's answer is: "Seeing the world, the *Jnani* sees the Self which is the Substratum of all that is seen; the *ajnani,* whether he sees the world or not, is ignorant of his true Being, the Self." Thus what matters is a change in outlook. To the *Jnani* the world is not real, and there is naught else than the Self or Brahman; whereas to the *ajnani* the world seems to be all too real. It is we that see the *Jnani* as if inhabiting a body and living as an individual in the world. But from his own point of view—if we may use the expression *his own* in the language of ignorance—there is no body and no world. Because we are world-bound, we seek for external marks of Wisdom in a *Jnani.* But there is no universality about these marks nor are they always sure guides. The ultimate guide in such matters is our own conscience or heart-conviction. Describing his impression of the Maharshi, Grant Duff says, "There it did not take me long to see that I was in direct contact with one who has passed beyond the boundaries of the senses and was indeed already merged in the Absolute of his true Self, though manifesting here for our benefit for a few brief years." But if one should ask him how it was that he received such an impression, he frankly confesses there could be no reasoning about it. "I can only reply," he says, "as I should to one who asked me how I saw the sun on

looking out of the window, by saying that I did so by the use of my eyes and incidentally of all my other senses collaborating. I did not need any algebraic or other proof of the existence of the sun. I do not need any other proof of the divinity of Ramana Maharshi." In these words of Grant Duff many of us who have enjoyed the sacred peace in the presence of the Maharshi will find an echo of our own experience.

The Maharshi seldom talks. He believes, like the Sages of yore, that the Self is best taught in Silence. Silence is the language of the Spirit; and speech can give only a distortion of the Truth. The Absolute Self which is beyond speech and thought cannot be attained through these. It is realised in the still Silence where the storms of words and the waves of thought have ceased. "Silence is everspeaking," says the Maharshi, "it is the perennial flow of 'language.' It is interrupted by speaking; for words obstruct this mute 'language' . . . Oral lectures are not so eloquent as Silence. Silence is unceasing Eloquence... It is the best Language." Even the Scriptures must have a stop. After indicating the direction, they too must turn back. For the Self is Peace and Silence. The Upanishadic seer declared शान्तोऽयमात्मा *Santoyamatma.* For the benefit of those who cannot understand the language of Silence the Maharshi sometimes talks; but he warns them at the same time that questions and answers lie within the region of *avidya.* Till the dawn of Wisdom, doubts will necessarily arise. When the Self is realised there will be no problem to be solved.

The quintessence of Sri Ramana's gospel is that the only Reality is the non-dual Spirit, and that it is to be realised through Self-enquiry or *Atma-vichara.* The Self is all; there is nothing else which is real. The Self is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, *Sat-Chit-Ananda.* Existence, Consciousness and Bliss are not qualities or features of the Absolute. They are but different expressions indicative of one and the same Reality. That in the Self Existence and Consciousness are identical is evidenced by the experience "I exist". "Unself-conscious existence is a contradiction in terms. It is no existence at all. It is merely attributed existence whereas true Existence, the *Sat,* is not an attribute, it is the Substance itself. It is the *Vastu.* Reality is therefore known as *Sat-Chit,* Being-Consciousness, and never merely the one to the exclusion of the other." The Self is also self-existent Bliss. True happiness, verily, is the Self. The Upanishads define Brahman as *Satya, Jnana* and *Ananda.*

The Absolute is unborn. In fact, nothing whatever is born. To the question, "Do not one's actions affect one in after-births?" the Maharshi once answered, "Are you born now? Why do you think of other births? The fact is, there is neither birth nor death. Let him who is born think of death and the palliative thereof!" This is the final truth. Acharya Gaudapada declares in the *Mandukya-karika*, "No *jiva* is born; there is no cause for such birth; this is the supreme truth, nothing whatever is born." The doctrines of *karma* and re-incarnation have no relevance from the standpoint of the Absolute Self. This is what the Maharshi teaches: "Reincarnation exists only so long as there is ignorance. There is really no incarnation at all, either now or before. Nor will there be any hereafter. This is the truth." The unborn Self which has neither beginning, nor middle, nor end is the sole Reality. It is this which should be realized.

What is the way to Realization? The Maharshi's clear and unambiguous answer is: *Vichara* or Enquiry. Other methods do not take us beyond the mind; only *Vichara* can. The Maharshi compares the attempt to destroy the ego or the mind through *sadhanas* other than *Atma-vichara* to the thief turning out a policeman to catch the thief, that is, himself. Self-enquiry ends in mental suicide; it provides an instrument whereby the mind destroys itself, thus revealing the Self. The Scriptures ask us to enquire into the nature of the Self: आत्मानं विद्धि *Atmanam viddhi.* The Maharshi directs us to put ourselves the question "Who am I?" But this is not an empty formula or a barren *mantra* to be muttered. Patient, intelligent and unsparing effort is required before progress could be registered on this arduous journey. "If the enquiry, 'Who am I?' were a mere mental questioning, it would not be of much value," observes the Maharshi; "The very purpose of self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its source." The source of the psychosis "I" (*aham-vritti*) is the Self. In enquiry what we should do is we must trace the psychosis to its root, instead of running along with it only to get lost in the welter of external objects. The reason why we should start from the *aham-vritti* is obvious. We must begin with that with which we are familiar. The *aham-vritti*, or what the Maharshi calls, "I-am"-ness is the one infallible clue in our quest after the Self. No other clue can lead us direct to Self-realization. The Maharshi explains the object of this method in these words: "The search for the Source of the *aham-vritti* is not merely the search for the basis of one of the forms of the ego but for the very Source itself from which arises the

"I-am"-ness. In other words, the quest for and the realization of the Source of the ego in the form of *aham-vritti* necessarily implies the transcendence of the ego in every one of its possible forms." The method of Self-enquiry is, no doubt, not an easy one. But there is no other means to Self-realization; and every other *sadhana* must culminate in *Atma-vichara.*

One potent mode of Self-enquiry which is advocated by the Maharshi and which is extensively taught in the Upanishads is to analyse the three states of experience, viz. waking, dream and sleep. Systems of philosophy other than the *Vedanta* are bound to be unsatisfactory because they base their conclusions on evidence provided by only a segment of experience, viz. the waking state. The Vedanta refuses to rest content with a mono-basic view. It seeks to understand the true nature of the Self by analysing the entire stream of experience. The net result of such an enquiry is that while the states and their contents change and pass, the Self remains constant and unchanging. It is self-luminous and shines by itself. In dream there is not the function of the external sense-organs; yet the Self is. In sleep even the mind goes to rest; but the Self stands as the sole witness of the absence of objects there. In order to teach that the Self is not to be confused with the three changing states, it is referred to as तुरीय, *Turiya.* In some books mention is made of a तुरीयातीत, *Turiyatita.* But as the Maharshi says, there is no need for such a conception. The *Jnani* who has transcended the three states abides merely as pure Consciousness. For him the three *avasthas* are not real, and *Turiyatita* is identical with *Turiya.*

The Maharshi teaches that the Heart is the seat of the Self. In the true sense of the term, the Heart or *Hridayam* means the very core of one's being, the Centre of all existence; it is with that we are identical, the One Reality which is eternal and immutable. The Maharshi makes it very clear that any reference to the physical body comes to be made only from the empirical point of view. From the absolute standpoint it is impossible to locate the Heart or Self in any place either inside the body or outside. "Truly speaking," says the Maharshi, "pure Consciousness is indivisible, it is without parts. It has no form and shape, no 'within' and 'without'. There is no 'right' nor 'left' for it. Pure Consciousness, which is the Heart, includes all; and nothing is outside or apart from it. That is the ultimate Truth." So, when any

particular part of the body is spoken of as the seat of the Self, it is so described only for the purpose of and as an aid to the layman's understanding. Thus understood, the place of the Heart in the physical body is in the chest, two digits to the right from the median. This, again, is not to be confused with the blood-pumping muscular organ which is also called heart. The spiritual Heart-Centre is quite different from it. But it may be asked, why, of all the parts of the body, the right side of the chest should be chosen as the seat of the Self? The reply is: by an unerring instinct, as it were, everyone points to that portion while referring to himself by gesture. It is there that the Self and the not-self lie tied up into a knot by *avidya*. As a preliminary step to resolve that knot, the *sadhaka* has to concentrate on the Heart-Centre and regard it as the seat of the Self. It will be interesting to note that Gaudapada, between whose mode of teaching and that of the Maharshi there is so much in common, locates the *Prajna*-Self in the Heart. *Visva*, he says is to be meditated on as residing in the right eye, *Taijasa* as in the mind or *manas*, and *Prajna* as in the ether of the Heart. The *Turiya* or the Self *per se*, however, cannot be located. Since space is only a phenomenon, the Self is not *in* space.

Not space alone, but the entire universe is non-real; it is a figment of *Maya*. This is what the Maharshi says, "There is no alternative for you but to accept the world as unreal, if you are seeking the Truth and the Truth alone." Why should it be so? The simple reason is that you will never get at Reality if you take the appearance to be real. The rope is not cognised so long as it is mistaken for a snake. The stock argument of the worldly-minded, that it is not possible to deny the reality of the world which all of us so vividly experience, does not baffle the *Vedantin*. The dream-world appears all too real to us, so long as we are in it; but as soon as we wake from it we realise its unsubstantiality. Similarly, our waking life is a dream from the standpoint of the Absolute. Our ultimate freedom lies in shaking off this dream and in our becoming aware of our Selfhood and non-duality.

Self-realisation, however, is not a matter of mere theoretical conviction. It is, no doubt, true that even he who is intellectually dissatisfied with the pluralistic view is far superior to those who have not received that awakening. But the Wisdom that liberates is intuitive, and makes us aware of our true nature in such a way that there is no return to

ignorance and unwisdom. In the final experience there is no fragmentation of consciousness, nor disintegration of Bliss. There one *is* the Self, which is Existence-Knowledge-Happiness. It is not a state which is to be newly acquired. It is already there. It has always been there. All that is necessary is to get rid of the delusion "I have not realised." The lid of ignorance that covers the Truth should be lifted. When the darkness of *avidya* is dispelled, the self-luminous Intelligence is realised to be the ever-shining light and the sole reality.

It is not possible to realise the Self, if there is attachment to the objects of sense. Hence all our Scriptures are unanimous in advocating the need for dispassion or *vairagya*. Not by works, nor by progeny nor wealth, but by renunciation alone is immortality to be gained. But true renunciation does not consist in external symbols such as sack-cloth and ashes. The outer marks have no value if there is not dispassion within. The following advice was given by the Maharshi to a *grihastha* who was tormented by the thought that his was a despicable position unhelpful to spiritual advancement: "Why do you think you are a *grihastha* ? Similar thoughts that you are a *sannyasin* will haunt you, even if you go out as a *sannyasin*. Whether you continue in the household or renounce it and go to the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thought. It creates the body and the world, and it makes you think of being a *grihastha*. If you renounce, it will only substitute the thought of *sannyasa* for that of *grihastha* and the environment of the forest for that of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there for you. They even increase greatly in the new surroundings. It is no help to change the environment. The obstacle is the mind : it must be got over whether in the home or in the forest." These words, however, should be interpreted with great care. They were given in an answer to a *grihastha* who was trying to assess the relative value of his own *asrama* and *sannyasa*. If he was really keen on renunciation, he would not have argued or hesitated. One who feels the burning heat of a red-hot iron rod does not take even the space of a moment to let go his hold of it. Final *sannyasa* comes as the fruit of a long endeavour in spiritual culture. Hence what must be developed in order to deserve it is the inner spirit of detachment. True *vairagya* must spring from within.

Vairagya is only one of the wings of the soulbird flying to its home. The other wing is *viveka* or discrimination. It is lack of *viveka* that

is responsible for the pursuit of false ideals even in the realm of spirituality. For instance, many a practitioner of religion is dazzled by the supernormal powers (*siddhis*) which he acquires in the path, and by exercising them misguides both himself and those who blindly trust him. The Maharshi warns us in unambiguous terms against falling a prey to miracle-mongers. The desire for *siddhis* is the hall-mark of bondage It will lead us into greater darkness, making the chances of release more remote. So we must be on our guard. The greed for power in whatever shape or form must be rooted out. This could be done only by wielding ruthlessly the sword of Knowledge, that is, by realising that nothing short of the non-dual Self is to be recognised as the ultimate Truth. That it is possible to realise this Truth here and now is the supreme gospel which is taught by the Sage of Arunachala, sometimes by words but mostly through the Stillness of a divine Silence. We hear of Suka and Yajnavalkya ; and we read in historical times of Gaudapada and Sankara. But here we have before our very eyes a contemporary witness to the Eternal Truth of the Vedanta, an eloquent commentary on the Upanishads. We for the most part seem to be so low in his presence, bound as we are in the coils of time. But it will do us good if at least once in a way we look up to him and take consolation in the hope that the Supernal which is his may some day be ours.





O ARUNA HILL, I BOW TO YOU

कदम्बकुसुमोत्करैः कपिशकान्तिकिञ्जल्कितं
मदाकुलपिकावलीसरसकूजिताम्रद्रुमम् ।
कुशेशयभवादिभैरखिलदेववृन्दैर्नतं
नमाम्यरुणपर्वतं रजतशैलतुल्यप्रभम् ॥

Your red colour enhanced by the bright red filaments of *kadamba* flowers; Your mango-groves filled with the sweet melody of lusty *koels*; Yourself worshipped by Brahma and other gods; famous as Kailasa itself, O Aruna Hill, I bow to You.

आम्नायान्तवनान्तदुर्गमचरस्तन्वन्महाक्ष्वेलितं
तीक्ष्णैरुक्तिपुनर्भवाग्रदशनैर्दुर्वादिदन्तावलान् ।
भिन्दन्निन्द्र इवाचलान् पशुगणं निर्जीवमापादयन्
सिंहोऽयं रमणाभिधोऽरुणवने स्वच्छन्दमास्कन्दति ॥

In the dense jungle of Vedanta roams at will a mighty Lion Whose roar resounds all over; like Indra with the mountains he rends the mad elephants of falsifiers with the sharp, strong claws and fangs of His wise words, and kills us all alike (never to be reborn). His name is Sri Ramana of Aruna forest!

—'*A Bhakta*'

WHAT I SAW IN SRI BHAGAVAN

By

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I suppose all men and women, unless plunged too deeply in the mad struggle for unthinking livelihood, have had times when they had to stand still and ask themselves: "Well, what is the meaning of it all? What am I doing in this world at all? And who am I, any way? Where do I come from, and where do I go after this is all over?" They ask, and they receive many answers. The trouble is that the answers are all different, and their confusion is so much the more confounded that most of them have to give it up with a shrug of the shoulders, and turn to more "practical" things with a sigh.

Many can then forget the doubt, or when it next lifts its head they just give it a pat, as it were, and send it obediently to sleep once more. But there are some, the really lucky ones, who do not find it so easy. Their longing, still unsatisfied, will not go to sleep again. It gnaws away at them, and gives them no rest by day or night. At times they even ask themselves why they should put up with the wretchedness of this life unless they can find the real cause and purpose of it all. The dogmas of the creeds, the empty conceit of priest and *pundit*, the insolent ignorance of pseudo-scientist, alike fail to pacify their need. It grows into an unsleeping restlessness, and drives them till they make a personal enquiry into the Truth.

There are some who call such an individual search for God mere intellectual pride; they tell the seekers to submit to authority and just swallow the theological pills given them by ignorant but well-meaning teachers. But even the most homoeopathic dose of theology or philosophy may upset some spiritual digestions, and they can find no cure that way. The Truth is never found by using somniferent sedatives, and the want remains burning in the seeker's empty heart.

Yes, this is also personal. It was somewhat like that with me for a number of years. In a sense it still is that way, for the want

cannot be satisfied by anything short of the Fullness, and naturally I have not yet made that "my own".

I came out to India more than twenty years ago in the hope and full faith that I would find here in visible form one of those great Masters of spiritual realisation to whom my Theosophy had led me in the inner worlds of thought and feeling. Sent by Dr. Besant and her workers to be a teacher in the school at Madanapalle, I first had there a hint of one direction in which I ought to look.

I remember it was some time in 1926 when we read in the paper of the passing away of a great Saint, known as "Pagal Haranath", whom they were comparing with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. One of the College lecturers there told me he had heard of another Saint like that, who lived at Tiruvannamalai, he thought in some temple. Now I had already learned that unclean foreigners like myself were not allowed into temples. (Is it for fear they defile the all-pure perfection of God, or that they may not give offerings to the priest? Others must say!). So I was assured that if I went to see this supposed Saint of the Tamil land, I should only be driven away with rudeness and abuse, such as most of us foreigners (for the sins of our countrymen) have to meet with at times unless protected by Government employment. So I left the matter just there.

I went on, rather half-heartedly, I must confess, with my own inner search for those Masters who live only in the inner worlds. The search was not wholly unsuccessful. To be honest, I must admit that I was at last convinced, by overwhelming evidences, that they do exist, that they take pupils, that they have vast love and wisdom. But the contact with them was very hard, and only rarely could their grace be won enough to be of much real use in my own daily life. So my discontent remained.

Then, about 1928–1930, came the great mental crisis for most of us Theosophists. J. Krishnamurti proved himself a world teacher indeed, but not in the way we had been encouraged to expect. He taught, certainly, but his teaching clashed with most of that of his precursors. I suppose we all felt much as the disciples of John the Baptist did when Jesus, to whom their own Master had sent them, began attacking the established religion of his people. I could not reconcile these differences. "Serve in a Master's name and be taken as his pupil,'

said one voice, and the other replied, "Masters and *Gurus* are crutches; you must stand on your own feet, and establish your own goal for yourself." The first voice retorted, "Try to enter the Path of Initiation, and join the Great White Lodge of world-servers!" But the reply came back, "There is no Path; initiations and spiritual labels and organisations are created by your exploiters; find the Kingdom of Happiness in your own heart." I could not reconcile these two voices, and I had to choose between them. It does not matter now which I chose. It is enough to say that I am still a keen Theosophist and that I have sat at the feet of our Maharshi.

Years passed. There was a political interlude. It was followed by my failure, despite close personal contact with Mahatma Gandhi, to recapture the old discarded ideal of service before self-realisation, as a way to it. And then came nearly two years in the forests of the Central Provinces, with only one human neighbour.

One evening of that time came suddenly a startling experience in full wakefulness. It startled, because it seemed to belie much that our Theosophical books declared about the remoteness of self-realisation from the lives of us "ordinary men". I could not deny the experience. It was a flaming reality of bliss, that burned away much of the heaped-up dross in my mind. Nor could I explain it myself, for it should come to only very advanced souls, according to our books. And none knew better than myself how little I could fit into such a category! My one neighbour told me that as the Self is always there, it can be contacted at any moment by anyone, no matter how unworthy he might seem. That would explain the experience, of course, but it seemed too good to be true. I remembered how Krishnamurti had said, "The path can be trodden in a flash even by the savage," but that too seemed to make nonsense of evolution and to destroy the very basis of rebirth, which had always been for me an established scientific fact.

I was left to puzzle it out for myself, in vain. The wheels of time turned round, and in 1935 they brought me back to Madanapalle. There, an old friend told me one day that he thought of visiting the Ashram of Ramana Maharshi, and was willing to take me with him. That reawakened my desire, which shyness and the fear of rudeness had put to sleep again in 1926. I at once agreed, and it was settled that we should go together in the next holidays, which fell in October 1936. He lent

me a copy of Narasimha Swami's great Life of the Sage. I cannot tell you how that thrilled me. The account of the boy Ramana's leaving home (I have always loved young folk, and the idea of a child saint has always haunted my mind), of his entranced journey to the unknown Arunachalam, of his long and intense absorption in God when he reached that place, just lit something in my heart that has not quite gone out again. God bless the writer of that book!

A fever of eagerness grew in me till the holidays commenced. But somehow there was to be a little check in the even flow of events. The same friend advised me to read Paul Brunton's book. I read it. It repelled me with a sense of the writer's insincerity. The adulation shown in it to one Saint went very ill with the scoffing criticism of others, and the book struck me somehow as a piece of journalism of the lower kind. I am speaking quite frankly, and apologise to any whom these words may seem to hurt; that is how the book seemed to me personally. For a few days it almost dissuaded me from going to Tiruvannamalai at all. Had the Maharshi stooped to allow this kind of vulgar advertisement of him, almost like a quack doctor seeking testimonials? Of course, I soon threw this foolishness off mind, and went to see for myself.

The kind welcome given by the Ashram people was my first impression. There was none of that arrogant and ignorant contempt for foreigners as such that I had met at times elsewhere, but rather an eager kindliness and anxiety to make me feel at home in what must be a strange environment. I had already an old Theosophical friend living in Pilakottu next door, and it was with him I could speak of my impressions from day to day.

I saw the Maharshi. It did not take long for me to be sure that I was in front of one who had in that very body I could see before me solved life's problem for himself. The radiant peace around him proved it beyond all cavil. The calm, like that of the midnight sky, was something too real to question for a moment. That part of my search, then, was over, even at the first glimpse. In the flesh I had seen a "Master".

I told my friend that night that I *knew* he was what the books call a *Jivanmukta*. Please don't ask me how I *knew* for I cannot answer that. It was just as one knows that water is wet and the sky is blue. It

could not be denied,—self-evident is the word. But I could not go as far as my friend went in asserting that the Maharshi is God Himself. Of course, in one sense, all are God, as the poem is its creator, but I am not by temperament a worshipper of human forms. God is transcendent as truly as He is immanent in his creation. "With one fragment of Myself......and I remain," says the Gita, truly indeed.

I had brought the usual list of questions to be asked, of course,—philosophical they were, and mostly about rebirth and spiritual evolution. As they were never asked, they do not matter. Shyness kept me silent while sitting in the Hall those first days. And before I broke that silence, the unspoken questions had solved themselves in their own irrelevance. It is a common experience; I only add my own testimony to that of many others.

The four days we had planned were soon over, and my friend went home to Madanapalle. But I could not tear myself away before the last day of the vacation, and stayed on alone, delighted, enthralled and yes, to some degree also pacified. That stillness of eternal deeps had somehow osmosed itself into my heart. The stormy nature I brought into life with me had met a Master who could quell the waves with a silent word, "Peace, be still!" like Him of Galilee. I was brought face to face with the eternal being who had entered and thrown off personalities in an unbroken chain through long ages on the earth. I knew myself to be absolutely *one* with that incarnate Peace on the sofa, and therefore to be one equally with the Unmanifest in whose stillness he was so obviously poised. "The mind is a wonderful thing!" as Bhagavan once said to one who talked to him in this strain and spoke of dreams and miracles.

Before I left that hallowed spot, I did after all put questions to the Maharshi, to solve that problem which had arisen in the forest. He answered it in a wonderful way that was new to me. He defined the real meaning of each word in the question itself, from the standpoint of Advaita. Applying these definitions to the question threw the answer clearly before the mind. I was wholly satisfied, and filled with joy.

God's grace is such that He gives at His will what He likes to give to any soul. The actual state of the soul then is of little importance, if it be but earnest and sincere in its desire for Him; it cannot *earn* His grace, even by crores of years of effort. It can never be

worthy of His blessing, but receives it purely out of His mercy. His *darshan* can never be the fruit of *sakama tapasya*, whatever certain books may say. It is only the overflowing love of the Lord that brings it to us.

I now find that Santa Teresa, the great Spanish mystic, says the same in her "Way of Perfection." God sometimes tries to lure, attract, even "wicked souls" to Him by one or two rare glimpses of His beauty, a sip or two of His loveliness, just to see if they rouse a thirst in the blissful soul to drink deep of that one Fountain of Life and Sweetness, or if they pride themselves on His goodness and think that they are somebody and should henceforth be respected by the world.

This has now come to be a true fundament of spiritual philosophy in my mind.

The day came, and I had to drag the body, like a load, away with me on a dreamlike journey to Madanapalle. But the peace that Bhagavan had put upon me remained in my heart, like a shining cloud of transparency through which all things passed dreamlike for about three weeks. The mind was caught and held in that peace, in a blissfulness it had never known before, while the body went on with its work in English Grammar classes and the like, almost as if unrelated with the Self. It is a pity I cannot bring about this mood at my own will: it can come only from the touch of the real Teacher of souls, as I have found.

I went again, several times. I went for swarming birthday functions I went when all was quiet, and a single Ashramite was drowsily pulling a *pankha* over the silent Maharshi, and the only sound the faint hum of summer flies. One whole summer vacation passed there in great happiness, while visitors came and went, and the pet rabbit amused our meditators, and disturbed a few of them, even the most distinguished. There are two incidents of that summer I would like to tell you, for they may be typical, and they have taught me much.

I was sitting one day in the Hall, more or less sleepily browsing in the heat over a notebook of extracts on Yoga. Now Bhagavan hardly ever spoke to me first (indeed there has been very little actual talking between us during the years; it did not seem necessary,

somehow), but that day he spoke to me, in English: "What is that book?" I told him. He said quietly, "Read Milarepa." I got up at once, and asked the friend in charge of the little library if he had a "Milarepa". He gave me Dr. Evans-Wentz's life of the Tibetan Yogi Saint. I read it, there in the Hall. I read it again. It thrilled and stirred deep places in my heart. Somehow, I feel Bhagavan had seen that it would be so, and therefore gave me the only order of the sort he has ever given me.

There was a young lawyer from North India. He was a passionate lover of the Divine Child of Brindavan, athirst for heart-food and longing for some human soul to worship as a form of the Lord of Love. We slept next each other under the stars, and talked nightly for hours of Mira and her Divine Spouse. This friend stayed in the Ashram restlessly for about two weeks. Each evening he told me he would go away next day, he had nothing to do with Advaita or with this cold lifeless statue on a sofa. I only told him he had come so far, he should wait a little longer. At last I failed to keep him there any more. He told me he was off that night, to go straight to Brindavan and there merge himself, if he could, in his Giridhari Krishna.

He bought some fruit for his farewell offering. Bhagavan was just going in for supper when this friend came up with his bag of oranges. Bhagavan stood and waited for him. He did not speak. His body was thrilled through and through. He ran and fell on Bhagavan's feet in a simple ecstasy of love, tears flowing from his eyes. The oranges rolled here and there unnoticed. Bhagavan stood silently. The friend got up with difficulty and stood there trembling. He could not speak the words of leave-taking. Bhagavan made a little gesture, with a smile and very gently said, "*Sari...Po!*" I had almost to bundle that friend into his waiting *jutka* and send him off without a word. He had seen his Lord, in a flash, and he left us in a daze of joy and emotion.

I think he never returned to the Ashram, but I have never forgotten that scene. Even now the memory thrills me. Yes, Bhagavan can suddenly appear to us as the Beloved of our heart, even when we have never dreamt that he would work such a miracle for us.

I have neither space nor time to tell of all the many incidents I have watched in that Ashram. I have taken all the descriptions of the *Jivanmukta* I could find in any scripture,—Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian,

Christian, Muslim, Jain etc. I have watched Bhagavan under all kinds of circumstances, and checked up what I have seen with those descriptions. I have not the smallest doubt but that the impression of my first day there is the truth. He alone of all the men I have seen seems to dwell always in *Sahaja-samadhi*. Of course, I am not qualified to judge, for none but the saint can know the saint. Yet I can only give my word that so it has seemed to me.

I have seen him in a humorous mood; I have seen him play the host with delicate grace that seems almost awkward at times. I have seen him quietly, motionlessly, challenging and defeating injustice or unkindness. I have seen him cutting vegetables for the Ashramites long before the dawn. I have seen again and again how he has solved the doubts, the agonies, the loss of faith, of people of many types,—often with a word, often with a moment of healing silence and a soft distance in his unmoving gaze. I have looked at his perfect handwriting in many scripts, all a model of beauty and care. I have heard him correcting the singers of hymns in his own glory, with an absolute impersonality that was obvious. I have watched his reactions to the noisy devotee, the lazy worker, the mischievous monkey, the crazed adorer, the over-bold flatterer, the one who would exploit his name. I have seen how totally impervious he is to all considerations of power, place, prestige, and how his grace shines equally on prince and peasant.

Then can I doubt that here indeed we have, if not God Himself,—for He is omnipresent,—at least Greatness incarnate, the majesty of the ancient hills blending with the sweetness of the evening star?

Sit before him, as we used to sit those summer evenings, and as the echo of the Vedic chantings dies away in silence, see the lines of crows fly home in front of that great holy hill of Arunachalam. Let the thoughts, worries, aspirations of the mind subside. A blissful glow of transparent unreality creeps across the scene, and you know you are not that foolish excited little person sitting there, but the eternal Self out of whom this world has spun its cobweb yarn of forms.

I know no other man whose mere presence has thus enabled me to make the persönality drop down into the abyss of nothingness where it belongs. I have found no other human being who so emanates his grace that it can catch away the ordinary man from his stillness and plunge him deep in the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being.

I cannot speak much of the method of ***Atma-vichara*** that he recommends. No doubt this kind of conscious search is the natural way for many, but frankly I failed to make it my way even after several attempts. But I found no need for the conscious search while in his actual presence. His grace, which is of course the grace of God whose representative and messenger he is, has been enough to give brief glimpses even to me of that Infinity wherein he always seems to live.

He will brush away all this nonsense of my talk with a wave of the hand and a smile, while saying as he once did, "It is the same in this and in another place. That bliss you feel is in the Self, and you superimpose it upon the place or environment in which you are bodily set. It has nothing to do with that." But, Bhagavan, this book is our kingdom; in it we say what we like about you and the blessings we have received *from you*; we shall not let you interrupt our foolish words just now. It is our chance to publicly proclaim our debt to the silent Teacher of Tiruvannamalai.

What, then, have I learned from him? That the Self we seek is indeed, as books have said before, the nearest thing to every one of us, that it can therefore be known *at once* by anyone who cares to look within deeply enough, that every kind of happiness is a reflection of the eternal Bliss which is the very nature of the Self—in other and, to Westerners born, more familiar words, that God dwells in our very heart as the Life of our life, the Joy of all our joys, and that if we but devote ourselves to Him He will soon reveal to us His love and fold us to Him for ever in the close embrace of perfect Union.

His message comes in many forms, according to the needs of those who come to him. Once a party of Muslims came. They asked him, "Sir, what is the highest goal of human life?" In one word he gave the whole essence of spiritual truth, the heart of their great religion as of every other. He said, "*Islam*," That is the secret of his greatness, perfect simplicity. *Islam*, self-surrender to the Supreme Being, whom we delight in knowing and loving as God; *Islam* alone can bring ***Salam***, or Peace. The only real Peace, which is eternal, infinite, divine, is that which flows in upon, wells up from, floods and floats the soul that throws itself away in loving surrender to the Good Father, from whom and in whom all are, to whom all shall return at last. Statesmen try to build a world at peace in vain while they ignore the only possible foundation for true peace.

Volumes could be written as commentary upon that perfect one word answer of his, without adding anything to its beauty and its self-sufficiency. Those Muslims sat for a while before him silently, then saluted deeply and left, satisfied that this was no mere Hindu saint, but a true Prophet of God, one who knows Him and lives always in His presence according to His will.

Of course, living in the Ashram has its strains and stresses. I have known moods of black despondency and disgust, of quick irritation, of what seemed at the moment like disillusionment. When the body's impurities are stirred up by a fast ready for elimination, there is a time when they seem to rule the body and pains of every kind increase. So when the mind is to be purged by a great Soul like this Maharshi, many dark things of the past are stirred to life again before they can be expelled. But I must add that those who are in the Ashram are very gentle, considerate and kindly when they see us dropping into such a mood. The generous services of one friend who used to translate for me the Tamil answers to my English questions, and get his translations approved by Bhagavan himself before giving them to me, did far more than he dreamed of service to this "foreigner," as he appears. The kindliness of the Sarvadhikari has also been unfailing in my several visits; no one should forget the help given to his *darsan* of the Master by the very existence of an efficiently run organisation on the spot, where he can stay, take food, and sleep. For that, we are almost entirely indebted to the work of our Swami Niranjanananda. Even the human hospitality of Bhagavan himself, though sometimes a little embarrassing to my innate shyness perhaps, has always been a delightful thing

Fifty years! Some have asked him why he does not come out and serve the world. For fifty years he has served the world as not a man whose name is loudly shouted by the crowds can ever dream of serving it. His very presence among us is a benediction. His attaining a clear and unflickering vision of the Self has raised the whole world a little nearer to the truth. His words have been an unfathomed ocean of comfort and inspiration to thousands. His silent peacefulness has revealed the Eternal in human form, as mountains, seas and skies alone can usually reveal It. Would that we all could serve the world as he has done! A French writer has written, "Every soul that uplifts itself uplifts the world," and the divine Chinese Sage Confucius said the same thing as this Elizabeth Leseur.

Salutations, therefore, to him though he is beyond such childishness, as also to the hallowed place Arunachala! Salutation on this happy Jubilee day to the people of South India, honoured and blessed by his being their companion! Salutation to those who have been wise enough in their day to bask in his grace, unrepelled by the almost frightening non-personality that broods around him!

This is a golden opportunity to come in touch direct with one of our Earth's greatest children. May it be used by more and more thousands during the coming years! And may some who see this happy Golden Jubilee of his attainment be present to celebrate the centenary in his visible presence at Tiruvannamalai!



SRI RAMANA
THE EMBODIMENT OF ADVAITIC TRUTH

By

Sri Swami Madhavtirtha, (Gujarat)

In the year 1944 Sri Manu Subedar invited me to accompany him to Sri Ramanasramam. We met in Bombay, but circumstances did not permit him to keep up to the programme and, therefore, I decided to proceed by myself to the abode of the Sage of Arunachala, since I had already read and heard much about him.

I reached the Asramam on the 14th of August. My first Darshan of Sri Maharshi, which happened to be in the dining hall, was so entirely free from sanctimonous conventions that I was at once put at ease and in perfect tune with the Sage's surroundings. The Sage's benign look of welcome made me feel at home and conveyed to me a sense of inaffible happiness which remained with me throughout my stay at Sri Ramanasramam. It has always been my habit to note down my impressions during such visits to important places and make a record of them for the benefit of other aspirants. The notes I took at Sri Ramanasramam formed the basis of my Gujarati book on Sri Ramana Maharshi, published at the instance of Sri Manu Subedar by the Sasthu Sahitya.

I should like to refer in the first instance to a somewhat mystical experience I had during my visit. It is rather difficult to describe such an experience but I may try to convey some idea to the reader about my experience by borrowing an anology from Srimad Bhagavata. Sometime before the birth of Sri Krishna, it is said, the Lord entered into the heart of Sri Vasudeva, who then shone like the sun. Later, this light passed into Devaki through a mere look of Vasudeva, when she shone like the moon. Even so, on the very first day of my Darshan of Sri Bhagavan in the dining hall, I found in the look of the Sage the dazzling brilliance of the sun. On a subsequent day while I was sitting in the presence of Sri Maharshi in the hall I recognised the same brilliance in the look of the Sage and it seemed to have pierced me to the core of my being, even as the Light of the Lord passed into

Devaki through the look of Vasudeva. My breath seemed to stop for a while and my mind was elevated into some spiritual realm of unutterable peace and happiness.

I know that I should have conveyed to the reader of not much my feeling and sentiment by the above description of the experience I had in the presence of the great Sage. This is partly due, as I had already stated, to the uniqueness and inexpressible nature of all mystical experience, and partly due to the difference in the equipment between one reader and another, and between the various types of spiritual aspirants trying to appraise spiritual values. In this context, to enable the reader to judge for himself where he stands on the spiritual path, a few words concerning the qualifications required of an aspirant will not be out of place. In the first instance, I would stress the importance of the study of Vedanta, since it is accepted on all hands that it is a reliable guide, helping the aspirant to avoid a wrong pursuit of spiritual ideals. Of course, Sri Maharshi is himself an extraordinary exception to this rule. Unaided by an intellectual knowledge of even the essential concepts of the Vedanta and without anybody's advice or instruction, he was able to follow unswervingly the path he had chosen, because his guide was his own experience of the Truth he had realised in his boyhood. But in the case of Sri Maharshi also the incidental knowledge he had of the *Sastras* later on was helpful in confirming his views on the nature of his own experience.

Foremost among the qualifications an aspirant should have is discrimination, which will help him to cultivate detachment. It is only through such detachment or *vairagya* that he can aspire to attain *Sakshibhava* or the state of the witnessing Self. The third and a still higher state is that in which one realises one's identity with all that exists. This is known as *abhinnabhava.* Though perfection in this attitude is realised only by such great personalities as the Maharshi, the common aspirant also can understand the nature and significance of *abhinnabhava* by staying, even for a short while, in the benign presence of the great Sage. While sitting in the Hall I observed Maharshi resting on the couch wholly unconcerned with what was taking place in his presence (for instance, the constant flow of visitors who prostrated themselves before him and moved on one after the other) and yet I could easily discern in him the attitude of oneness with all or *abhinnabhava*, through which, I can confidently say, he touched the inner being of the

visitor, who was able to feel within himself the presence of the Universal spirit transcending thought. I would venture to suggest that the reciprocal relationship between Sri Maharshi in his *abhinnabhava* and the aspirant sitting in his presence is analogous to that of a radio transmitter and a receiver. If the visitor is really anxious to obtain the fullest benefit of the benign influence radiating from the silent presence of the Sage, he (the visitor) must attune his mind, which according to the above analogy will be the "receiving set", to the proper wavelength. In view of the oneness and universality of the Self Absolute, a few words of explanation would seem to be necessary in order to bring out clearly the relation between the attitude of the Sage who is described as "transmitting" his spiritual influence to "others", and the *disposition* of the visitor who is advised to keep his mind receptive and responsive to the subtle influence of the Sage.

The use of the analogy of the radio transmitting and receiving sets in this context should not mislead the reader into thinking that this is an implicit recognition of a duality in the ultimate Truth. For a correct understanding of the Sage's point of view with reference to himself in relation to "other", I may quote his teachings, which are perfectly clear and beyond all possible doubt. On page XXIX of *Sat-Darshana Bhashya and Talks with Maharshi* it is stated as follows:— "When the Yogi rises to the highest state of *Samadhi*, it is Self in the Heart that supports him, whether he is aware of it or not. If he is aware in the Heart, he knows that in whatever state he is, it is always the same Truth, the same Heart, the one Self, the Spirit that is present throughout, eternal and immutable." It is from this State alone in which the Sage ever abides does he exercise his benign influence over the numerous aspirants seeking his presence. Therefore, in this State of Absolute Being, which is One and Eternal, there is not the slightest scope for any duality. The words of the Sage given in another context also confirm the above statement. When some visitor asked Sri Maharshi as to why he should not go about and preach to the people the Truth he had realised, he replied "Real preaching is possible only through Silence." The duality which is necessarily involved in verbal preaching is entirely eliminated in this Silence. Moreover, Truth to be Truth must be universal and all-inclusive. That is, that State in which the Truth is realised cannot be veiled, much less obstructed by the mind and its three states, waking, dreaming and of deep sleep. The State which at once transcends and includes the three states

of the mind is known as *Sahaja Sthiti*, सहजस्थिति. In other words, the Silence of the Sage is constant and exercises uninterruptedly its benign influence, whether the Sage appears outward to be aware of the world or not. Reverting to the analogy of the transmitter, I may say that the Sage's spiritual influence is transmitted unceasingly *as far as he is concerned.* But from the point of view of the seeker, who is still subject to the veiling power of *maya,* the continued beneficent influence exercised by the Sage will have no apparent effect unless he (the seeker) is himself "prepared" to receive the same. Just as the radio receiving set articulates accurately the transmitted voice only when the instrument is properly tuned to the transmitter, so also is the seeker able to receive the Sage's spiritual influence when he is "prepared" for it. This "preparation" consists essentially in his *sadhana* or practice of discrimination and detachment already referred to.

While it may be conceded that in the Absolute there can be no differentiation, the question still remains as to how such differentiation, multiplicity, etc. rise on the relative plane. What are the primary factors which constitute the basis for the sense of differentiation so characteristic of human knowledge? In the ultimate analysis it will be found that three are the important factors, namely, time, space and causation. During my stay of about two weeks in Sri Ramanasramam, I had had ample opportunity to question Sri Maharshi on various philosophical problems as I desired to have a comprehensive understanding of Sri Maharshi's approach to these abstruse problems. There is also one other point for consideration, namely, how the phenomenal knowledge with its multiplicity, differentiation etc. is related to the Knowledge of the Self Absolute. On all these different topics I shall be referring to Sri Maharshi's answers in the sequence in which I happened to receive them from him.

There is a very important verse in *Sri Ramana Gita* (and this verse was written by the Sage himself and was incorporated by his disciple Sri Ganapati Muni in the book) which gives the synopsis of spiritual *sadhana* with a categorical declaration concerning the absolute identity of the Brahman with the Self. The verse runs as follows:—

हृदयकुहरमध्ये केवलं ब्रह्ममात्रं ह्यहमहमिति साक्षादात्मरूपेण भाति ।
हृदि विश मनसा स्वं चिन्वता मज्जता वा पवनचलनरोधादात्मनिष्ठो भव त्वम् ॥

"In the interior of the cavity of the Heart the One Supreme Being (Brahman) shines as 'I'-I, verily the Atman. Entering into the Heart

with one-pointed mind either through Self-enquiry or by diving within or by breath-control, abide thou in *Atmanishtha.*" I had a small doubt with regard to this description of the Self Absolute or Brahman as residing in the Heart. I asked Sri Maharshi if, as the verse declares, a fixed place in the body is assigned to the Self, would it not predicate finitude of That which is infinite and all-pervading. If the Self is located in the Heart within the physical body, would not the categories of time and space (which are necessarily applicable to the physical body) apply also to the Self Absolute? Sri Maharshi graciously referred me to a very similar question put by Sri Rama to Sri Vasistha. This is contained in the passage of *Yoga Vasishtha*, Ch. V, Canto 78, vers 32. Vasistha says that there are two kinds of hearts, the one which is all-pervading and which should be "accepted", and the other which is limited by time and space and which should be "rejected". The all-pervading Heart is within as well as without, and when the "body-am-I" idea disappears, it is neither within nor without. That is the real Heart. In that all things appear as images in a mirror. When the mind gets rid of all desires, the vital breath gets quiet, and the all-pervading Heart is experienced as such."

Then I enquired Sri Maharshi if this description in *Yoga Vasishtha* of the process of realisation can be stated in somewhat different terms as follows. When a man enquires into himself and tries to find out the root of the 'I', he reaches the state of the witnessing Self, and when the field of the witnessing Self begins to expand so as to cover all objective existence, it gets identified with the all-pervading Brahman and the objects lose their separate existence. While I was thus explaining myself to Sri Maharshi, he intervened saying "This State is explained by one of the scriptures as follows:—

निमेषार्धं न तिष्ठन्ति वृत्तिं ब्रह्ममयीं विना ।
यथा तिष्ठन्ति ब्रह्माद्याः सनकाद्याः शुकादयः ॥

That is, in this State one acquires permanent Brahmic beautitude similar to that acquired by Brahma, the Creator, Sanaka, Suka (ancient *rishis*) etc. Being an ardent student of Srimad Bhagavata, it occurred to me how incongruous it would be for Suka to recite all the 18,000 verses of the epic before King Parikshit, if really Suka was in that pure Brahmic State. I at once referred my doubt to Sri Maharshi who promptly replied saying "Reading or no reading, and as a matter of fact anything done or undone, makes not the slightest difference to the Sage in that Brahmic State."

From a close study of Sri Maharshi's teachings one learns that it is this Brahmic State which is referred to by him as *Sahajatma-nishtha*, सहजात्म निष्ठ or *Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, सहज निर्विकल्प समाधि that is, the natural and spontaneous abidance in the Self Absolute. The life of Sri Maharshi ever since he came to Tiruvannamalai (just over halt a century ago) as described in the monumental book, *Self-Realisation*, and his day-to-day life as we see it now, are the proof and an occular demonstration of that Brahmic State.

On a subsequent day I asked Sri Maharshi for his views on my book *Maya*, which I had sent him sometime ago. He said he had seen the book and read it. He was gracious enough to point out a mistake in my treatment of the subject and how I based my arguments on a wrong presumption. He explained to me the correct view-point at some length. My purpose in writing that book was to prove that the concept of *maya* as propounded by Sri Sankara is fully borne out by the modern theory of relativity. This theory, as is well known, maintains that time and space are purely relative notions dependent entirely on the conditions governing the observer and the object under observation and that there is no such thing as objective time and space. When two observers, taking different positions in space, observe a particular event, they obtain different time-space measures, which will conflict with each other and necessarily vitiate any conclusion they may arrive at concerning the particular event. Sri Maharshi pointed out to me that the very presumption of two observers being situated at two given points is itself an unwarranted one. That is, taking for granted that there are two individual observers the notion of relativity must itself apply to the space-measure separating the two. In other words, the space between one observer and another being relative and unreal there cannot be more than one real observer. I at once recognised my error in the treatment of the concept of *maya* ; I should have shown in my book how the presumption (taken for granted by all scientists) that there can be two observers separated by a fixed time-space measure is itself subject to all the imperfections inherent in our perceptions, as established by the theory of relativity. It was a revelation to me that Sri Maharshi could judge off-hand, as it were, such modern theories as that of relativity, proceeding entirely on the basis of his own experience of the Absolute.

Verse 16 of *Sat-Darshana Bhashya* clearly declares Sri Maharshi's views on time and space.

क्व भाति दिक्काल कथा विनाऽस्मान् दिक्काललीलेह वपुर्वयं चेत् ।
न क्वापि भामो न कदापि भामो वयं तु सर्वत्र सदा च भामः ॥

"Where is space without me, where is time? The body exists in space and time, but no body am I. Nowhere am I, in no time: yet am I everywhere and in all time." This is perfect spiritual experience and dispels all false notions about time and space. Time is not an objective reality with a beginning and an end. The very idea of attributing a beginning or an end to time is something absurd and fantastic, since what preceded and followed the beginning and end of time must also come within the time-span. The approach to the problem of time as described by verse 16 does away with past and future, the only Reality being the Eternal Present. But such a description of the one Real as the ever-present and changeless Self, demands of the earnest seeker the faith and conviction that the realisation of his perfection must be here and now and not in some remote future. Moralists are never tired of pointing out to some distant future as the golden age to come, preceded by a long process of evolution. Perhaps, it is this kind of "Progress-worship" that is really responsible for the enormous moral inequity we find in modern society, for the ruthless exploitation of innocent peoples during the so-called peaceful times and the wholesale destruction of life and property during the upheavals of war. For are we not told that moral progress of the world is the special concern of the exploiting nations and that global warfare is the sure means for establishing peace? The end is made to justify the means, and this end recedes eternally before an unending evolution towards progress! These moralists do not show when and where their "Progress" will end.

One day, during the second week of my stay, I was standing near the northern gate of the Asramam leading to the hill-path. With me was a devotee who had returned the previous day from Sri Aurobindo's Ashram. It was the evening time and Sri Maharshi came by that way after his usual evening stroll. I wanted to ask him about his views on the theory of creation and the presence of the devotee who has returned from Sri Aurobindo's Ashram prompted me to refer to Sri Aurobindo's views on the subject. I may say here that I am well acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, and during my earlier visits to him some twenty-five years ago I used to discuss with him freely about these spiritual subjects. Incidentally while I spoke to Sri Maharshi, I referred also to the Vedanta as propounded by Sri Sankara, which discountenances

the theory of creation as being merely an aid for the understanding of the less advanced soul, मन्दाधिकारि, and maintains that there is no real basis for such a theory of creation. I asked Sri Maharshi his opinion on the subject; and he replied by quoting the following verse from the *Karika* of the *Mandukya Upanishad*

न निरोधो न चोत्पत्ति र्नबद्धो न च साधकः
न मुमुक्षु न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥

"There is neither dissolution nor creation. There is no one bound and there is no aspirant. There is nobody desirous of liberation and nobody liberated. This is the truth from the transcendental standpoint." I am sure that Sri Maharshi attaches no importance to any of the theories of creation, evolution etc. He invariably emphasises the oneness and unchangeability of the Self or Brahman, which is the one and only Reality, to which there can be no "progress" and in which there is no duality and difference.

On another day I referred to some other aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy such as the theory of *Bheda-abheda* or Unity in Difference, the higher and lower natures in man, evolution in time, descent of the Spirit etc. With regard to the theory of *Bheda-abheda*, Sri Maharshi remarked that where there is the least difference there is also the ego, and if difference is conceded Unity would merely be a theoretical proposition. It is accepted on all hands that in the Absolute there can be no ego. The transition from the ego to the egoless State, if it can at all be called a transition, is not through a change or evolution from the lower to the higher nature in man but through the total denial or destruction of the ego. It is like a man waking up from a dream: and this transition from the dreaming state to the waking cannot be called an evolution from a lower to a higher state, it is the total negation of the one state in the other.

Evolutionists are confronted with another insuperable difficulty. Any evolutionary theory requires a uniform, objective time. According to both Vedant and modern science, there cannot be an objective time. The theory of relativity has finally demolished it. To try to build a theory of evolution conflicting with the established data of science and alien to the Upanishadic conclusions as expressed by the *Mahavakyas* may be more unhelpful than edifying.

I shall conclude my article with a short but profound discourse of Sri Maharshi on "surrender". The question rose this way. Referring to the contradiction between the two lines of the first verse of the *Isavasyopanishad*, I asked Sri Maharshi for the correct interpretation.

ईशावास्यमिदम् सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥ *

The first line of the verse declares that the One Supreme Being Eternal and Immutable, is the basis of everything changeable. In other words, this line maintains that the mutable world is only a divine manifestation. Nevertheless, it is this world, the second line of the verse enjoins the aspirant to renounce in order to obtain true Happiness. The contradiction between the two lines is thus very patent. If the world is nothing but the Divine, why should the aspirant be asked to renounce it? With these ideas in my mind I asked Sri Maharshi how renunciation is at all possible if the entire manifested existence is nothing but the one Divine Substance. What is it that should be renounced? "One must renounce the wrong knowledge," replied Sri Maharshi, "that anything but the Divine exists. That is, one must give up the notion that there is any duality or multiplicity, whatever the manifested existence may appear to be."

Before I give the rest of Sri Maharshi's observations, let me say that this interpretation of the first verse of the Upanishad is very original and, I think, unanticipated by any commentator, ancient or modern. There is perhaps, none that does not take for granted an implicit contradiction between the two lines of this verse. But Sri Maharshi finds not even an apparent contradiction.

"The Supreme Being is the only Reality, One and Unchangeable," said Sri Maharshi. "It alone is and sustains the apparent multiplicity. Therefore, renounce the knowledge that anything except the Divine exists. In other words, renounce the sense of duality or multiplicity. Then as a matter of course you will not covet anything, because one covets a thing only when one believes there is the other to be coveted. The initial error lies in the sense of duality whereby

* Everything changeable in this world is pervaded by the Supreme Being. Only by the renunciation of that (world) support thy inner Self: do not covet the riches of others.

one separates oneself from the thing coveted. The ignorant man believes that coveting a thing and getting it is the source of joy. No. He alone enjoys who renounces the idea of separateness. That is, his is the true Bliss who knows that the One, Unchangeable Supreme Being, identical with himself and with everything that exists, is the one and only Reality."

"It is no doubt well that the *Sastras* should admonish the layman and make him give up the notion of duality," put in one of the visitors then present, "but how are we to reconcile this teaching of the *Sastras* with a no less important injunction, namely, that of self-surrender to the Divine? If there is no duality whatever, where is the necessity or possibility for self-surrender?" In view of Sri Maharshi's exposition of the inner meaning of the first verse of the *Isavasyopanishad* as inculcating the absolute Oneness of the Reality, the visitor's question on self-surrender to the Divine as involving a duality, roused the interest of all of us, and we eagerly awaited Sri Maharshi's reply. Not only was Sri Maharshi's reply very cogent, but also every word he spoke seemed to have a force that made disputation entirely out of place. At first he appeared to have completely ignored the visitor's question. For a minute or two he was silent thus rousing all the more our curiosity to know how he would tackle the question. I shall try to give Sri Maharshi's reply briefly and, as far as possible, in his own words.

"We are familiar with a custom among some people in these parts based on deep sentiments of devotion to Lord Ganesha. Daily worship to His image (which is found installed in all the temples of the locality) is an indispensable ritual for these people before their daily meal. A certain poor traveller of this persuasion was passing through a sparcely inhabited country. Not finding a temple of Ganesha anywhere nearby that he might perform his daily worship to the Image before his midday meal, he resolved to make an Idol of the Deity out of the small quantity of jaggery he was carrying with him (with flour etc.) and perform the ritual before his meal. Having made the Idol out of the jaggery, he proceeded with the ritual in right earnest. And then to his bewilderment he found that for the purpose of *naivedya* or food-offering he had nothing sweet in his baggage, since he had converted all the jaggery he had into the Idol. But no worship is complete without the customary *naivedya*. So the simple-minded way-

farer pinched out a small bit of the jaggery from the Idol itself and offered the bit as *naivedya* to the Deity. It did not occur to him that in the very act of pinching out a bit of jaggery he had defiled the very Idol which he wanted to worship and had therefore made both the worship and the offering worthless. Your idea of self-surrender is nothing better than the offering made by the wayfarer. By presuming your existence as something apart from the Supreme Being you have merely 'defiled' It. Whether you surrender yourself or not, you have never been apart from that Supreme Being. Indeed, at this present moment, even as in the past or the future, the Divine alone is."

There is a characteristic way in which Sri Maharshi draws the aspirant's pointed attention to the great Advaitic Truth he has realised and which finds spontaneous expression in every act of his daily life. In his biography one comes across several incidents in relation to which Sri Maharshi made profound observations, as for instance on *Nishkamya Karma*, in order to teach the practice of true wisdom in life. Let me illustrate the point from my personal experience. On the day I was to leave the Ashram I had arranged for the purchase of some fruits locally for offering them to Sri Maharshi. When the time arrived for me to take leave of him, I put the fruits reverentially before him and said in a few words that I was leaving the place presently. Sri Maharshi smiled benignly and remarked with a twinkle in his eye, "And so, you are offering jaggery to lord Ganesha!" I could understand he was referring to the parable he had related the other day with reference to "self-surrender", but how aptly has he found the occasion to drive home in a very practical way the moral of the parable, namely that all is but the Divine!

In the preceding pages I have touched only a few of the philosophical problems I had had occasion to refer to Sri Maharshi during my fourteen days of stay at the Ashram. Whether he spoke in order to clear the doubts of an earnest aspirant or whether he sat in perfect silence, one receives a fresh illumination, a new angle of vision and sometimes a very inspiring reorientation to one's spiritual outlook. As embodying the Advaitic Truth, the One, Universal Spirit transcending the bounds of time and space, Sri Maharshi truly represents in himself the University of Spiritual Education, the ancient Hindu Culture of the Heart. The so-called university education imparted to the modern youth in our colleges has neither the vision of Unity nor the spirit of Uni-

versality. The youth of the present day will be the citizen of the future, and the aim of their education should be to know the Unity and Oneness of all life that they may fulfil the duties and obligations of world-citizenship they are bound to inherit in the times to come. To know this truth of Unity and Oneness of existence, all who desire the culture of the Heart should seek the presence of the venerable Sage at the Hill of the Holy Beacon, who speaks, lives and embodies in himself the Peace, Unity and Oneness of existence. As the abode of the Sage representing the Advaitic Truth, I must say that Sri Ramanasramam is the University of universities.

TO

SRI BHAGAVAN

THE ONE REALITY ETERNAL

The World is *still*. And Light and Sound and Thought
Transfixt in Space and Time, like insects caught
In amber rock, are bygone things inwrought
In Cosmic Consciousness, where all is Nought.

Alas, how vain are eyes that think they see!
And ears they hear, and Mind that it is free!
True Freedom is to stay all Thought and be
Like waveless waters of the deepest sea.

No more can I be still than go astray,
For fixt is all I do from day to day.
My steps along the round of Time must stay;
Without Thy Grace I cannot even pray.

But what is fixt to me to Thee is void;
Through hardest rock Thy softest will can ride;
All fire, water, earth and air must hide
(As I) this mock existence Thee beside.

C. S. Bagi, M. A.

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

H. Ghosh, M.A., Holkar College, Indore

AUSTERITY, PURITY AND FAITH

When I first had the good fortune of being introduced to the presence of the Great Sage of Arunachalam, my imagination was struck by the austerity and simplicity of his sublime countenance. "On two wings is a man lifted up above earthly things, on simplicity and purity." So said Kempis six hundred years ago. If we are to approach the Inner Self, surrender, complete and final, is essential. We should draw our mind from the outer world so that we may attain to the inward. The devout soul cannot afford to spread itself over the outward things of the world. The pursuit needs the one-pointed mind or the singleness of desire to serve and to obey Him.

As I am not the body or the mind, should I allow them to enslave me? If I am THAT, the body or the mind should be my slave. It should be sound and strong, for with the help of the same mind we must know the Overself, the only Reality, which is the ever-present, joyful and absolute Consciousness. Though in the world, we are not in it, we are ever out of it. This mood has to be persistently cultivated if any degree of success is ever to be attained. This singleness of purpose needs great intellectual strength and faith. Introspection or self-analysis is itself an intellectual process, which however, with devotion and submission, is necessary for any spiritual activity. One really must have a courageous soul to know the Overself.

Our mind is so easily attracted or diverted by the distractions of the world. Therefore, this one-pointedness is so difficult of attainment. But the rewards are infinite. We can bend ourselves to the Infinite and surrender our ego-self at least for some time. Frequent practice, Ramana Bhagavan says, makes it easier and we are assured that a time comes when one can move like gods among men, unattached and unaffected.

So long as we allow ourselves to be tossed on the sea of life by the casual visitation of some passing desire or passion, there is obviously no chance of experiencing the infinite Bliss. Fulfilment or non-fulfilment of these desires etc., is equally destined to drive us towards God, who is our real home. Sri Bhagavan never moralises but it is my belief that he is the greatest Moralist since Jesus. This austerity is indelibly marked on his face and cannot escape the attention of even a casual observer. If a man is firmly settled in the quest of the Eternal, he will cease to care for the ministrations of the world and need not seek comforts of men.

One great outcome of this austere simplicity is humbleness of mind. This humility is a necessary sequel to the complete surrender and submission of our ego-self. If you are He, is it not foolish to take pride in our wealth, position and material well-being? Greater things are in store for us. Why then trouble about the gifts of the world? We are thus enjoined by the Maharshi to forsake, once and for ever, our petty selves and to approach the divine Self which is in all.

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John IV, 14). If everything is of God and from God and in God, why protest in vain? Why not accept in meek submission whatever comes from Him? That is real humility, complete submission or faith, that is the real spirit of the devotee of Sri Bhagavan. We should, therefore, ascribe nothing to ourselves, but give all unto Him, without whom man or the world has nothing. It is the Overself or the Absolute that impregnates every animal or human being. That is the cause why vain-glory or egoism has no rational basis. If once heavenly grace enters our mind, there can be no envy or narrowness of mind. Thus, the whole world is unified and according to Sri Bhagavan, that is the divine purpose towards which all creation is moving. However much we may resist, the purpose will be fulfilled. It is, however, in the nature of man or matter to resist the divine. This resistance is due to our primal ignorance, from which we have to liberate ourselves, if not in this life, in the next life, or after a million lives.

"..............the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world;
compelling there

All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross, that checks its flight,
To its own likeness." (*Shelley*)

Resistance is vain then, for

"The pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal." (*Shelley*)

So whether we like it or not, whether we worship Lord Krishna or Jesus or Mohamed, the Eternal will compel us to be merged in it. If that is our ultimate destiny, why not engage ourselves in the quest. here and now? The questions, "Who am I? Whence am I? What am I?" must be asked frequently and repeatedly. Persistence in this quest will gradually convince us of our glorious heritage and also of the divine purpose in things.

If our mind has been humbled by persistent self-inquiry or self-introspection, faith will follow this gracious humility. It is not a blind faith but a living and sure faith, based on our own intellectual findings. It is the nature of faith to fill the whole soul, to suffuse us body and mind. Once this faith is awakened, our pursuit becomes easier. According to Sri Bhagavan, knowledge and faith lead to the same goal. What is faith without knowledge? Knowledge without faith is equally valueless. Persistent and constant self-inquiry will lead us to greater knowledge and will awaken fulness of faith. Once this faith is engendered, our journey through the bivouacs of life becomes much pleasanter and much less painful. We need not care who is with us or against us, so long as we feel that God, who remains seated in the altar of every human breast, is with us in everything we do. It belongs to Him to deliver us from all tyranny, confusion or unrest, provided, however, we surrender to Him faithfully, earnestly and whole-heartedly.

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (James IV, 6).

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him and I am helped."

"Save thy people and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up for ever." (Psalm 28).

Therefore it is that some men filled with curiosity go to the Ashram and come back disappointed. Our mood has to be chastened and

subdued before we can worthily beg for divine help or intervention. As we are filled with a lot of intellectual pride or some such useless trumpery, the high gods frown in disdain and refuse to offer any gifts.

THE ROMANCE OF THE QUEST

Romance in art has been defined as love of the strange, the wonderful, the supernatural and the adventurous. Romantic artists like Scott and Coleridge have found expression of their genius in exploration of the chivalry of the middle ages, in crusader of the past, in the supernatural tales of mystery, in diablerie, in the piteous lamentations of a woman wailing for her demon lover or in pictures of

> "Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

Wordsworth tells us that the greatest of romance is to be found in common sights and sounds, in the song of the thrush, in the meanest blades of grass and in the workings of the mind of commonplace humanity and we need not seek artificial stimulations in the thrilling stories. If the familiar things round us do not fill us with a sense of mystery and awe, we are certainly dead to the beauty of God's creation. Shakespeare says in *Hamlet*: "What a piece of work is man. How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties' in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" Wordsworth's poetry is mostly devoted to the expounding of the inner workings of man's mind. Ultimately he comes to the great realisation that there is a divine spirit which is at the same time transcendent and immanent. Wordsworth by very devious routes came to the great Truth that all is of God and all is in God. The pursuit of this truth is the greatest of romances or romantic pursuits. Nature and human life both together make up a book of wonder and power. The noblest pursuit, according to Sri Bhagavan, is the pursuit of our Overself. The joys are perennial and the pursuit eternal. With the mind of man, we can explore the divine or the infinite in man. What could be more amazing, and what could give us more thrills? The retirement of the Overself is inviolate but at the same it is ever installed in our own heart and ready to welcome us, if only we care to gaze inward. That is the great message from Arunachalam. If we consistently follow the science of self-

introspection, suddenly some moments of awakened feeling will intervene. In those rare moments, knowledge and mystic faith are one and in those moments some divine experience of the Atman will come to the mind in a flash and the flash will exterminate and dissolve our ego-self. By meditation this attitude of mind can be made almost customary and regular. When a man is lost in temper or does something ignoble out of greed or envy, we say that he has lost *himself*. This phrase is very significant.

If we can fathom the darkest recesses of the human mind, we shall be convinced of the utter futility of human wishes and we shall begin to read new values into life and experience. This is where the grace of the *Guru* comes in. But we must ourselves direct the movements of our mind to the search. Quite often, we shall find ourselves in the position of an amazed watcher and the tumbled chaos of experience will have no power to deaden our intuitive perception of the divine in us. To live for ever as *That* is the happy and unique privilege of sages and seers, but the creation of God is so ordered that His light will not be denied even to the lowliest of the low, the deaf and the blind, the decrepit and the leper.

In the pursuit of God, according to Sri Bhagavan, reason works through feeling. Thus, there is no quarrel between knowledge and faith, between science and God. The same forces which govern the stars and planets also determine the hopes and fears which tenant the human breast. They move to the same eternal music. If that be so, why not offer allegiance now to the eternal order which is the key to the whole?

* * * *

NON-DUALITY

It is the deep and abiding sense of unity in things, of real correspondences and connections working throughout the universe of perception and thought, which gives profundity to Sri Bhagavan's teachings. There is no "Thou" or "He" to him. To Him and to all others like Ramana Maharshi all is One. So long as the ego-self is active, this perception is well-nigh impossible. But we need not despair. We may try at least to see the divine face in others, a divine purpose in mundane affairs and as we act, we have to act according to Ramana Maharshi in an attitude of non-attachment and perfect dispassion. God will approve the depth, not the tumult of the soul. In perfect repose

and quietude of mind, it may be possible to lead the busiest of lives to be engaged in social and philanthropic duties. It sounds homiletic but this kind of self-education is warranted by the Gita and also by the Sage of Arunachalam.

Sri Bhagavan is not a mere mystic. He does not look into some future world, but gazes intently on what is real and eternal in him. Heaven to him is not a far-off place. Here in your heart or nowhere, the soul of all things is to be found.

HAPPINESS

The revelations made to the pure heart will fulfil all our desires. Only those who have put away all selfish longings may see clearly, may feel the radiance of this happiness. Something of this happiness the worst of sinners among us will feel in the presence of this exalted and self-illumined Sage of Arunachalam. The world with its gaudy trappings recedes further and further from your vision and you and Sri Bhagavan can, at least for the time being, be one and you realise that the fate of humanity is set in a truer and a larger world. We feel

> That Man, who is from God sent forth,
> Must yet again to God return.

It must, however, be noted that unless one has really been merged in the Infinite like Sri Bhagavan, he should not employ the language of non-duality. Jesus truly warned us that the name of God should never be taken in vain. It will be a very Satanic device, if we attribute all our sinful desires to God and if we try to escape moral or social responsibility. That is never the purpose of his silent teachings. If we care to gaze inward, we shall always know what is really from our Overself, undimmed by worldly desires and selfish motives. The world may not know but our *Atman* knows all. Thus, there is no escape.

MIRACLES

Many devotees go to Sri Bhagavan for a miraculous cure of their physical ailments or for a wondrous change in their worldly destiny. Sri Bhagavan remains unmoved like a rock of granite. What else can he

do? Is not each man a daily miracle to himself and why does he not seek comfort or redress within himself? But if anyone invokes Him in a spirit of absolute trust, his prayers will be answered.

" Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered." (Meredith). That is a profoundly correct statement. My prayers may not be answered in the way I desire, but I shall certainly attain more of internal peace and harmony and happiness, which are the objects of all our endeavours.

Miracles happen every day, every moment of our life. But one must develop a mood of complete self-denial in order to be able to see them. Each one of us can work miracles if we care to; but such moments are rare in the lives of ignorant people like us. But Sri Bhagavan rightly warns us against the allurements of miracles or clairvoyance or prophetic powers. These experiences or powers may come to a true devotee, but he should not be lured by them or else, the main issue, the most miraculous experience, will be denied to him and he will remain, like Trisanku, suspended in mid-air.

CONCLUSION

In all humility, I confess that I am the least competent of his numerous devotees and disciples to write about Sri Bhagavan or his teachings. The finite can never know the Infinite and the Illimitable. I associate myself with this Souvenir Volume only to offer my humble homage to Him. I shall conclude by praying that He may be in our midst, as He is to us today, for many more years to illumine dark souls like mine. A silent look or an encouraging word from Him will do much more good than all the homiletic literature of the world.

"*Dominus Illuminatio Mea*"

EASY TO REMEMBER IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW

By

C. S. Bagi, M. A.,
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Bearing and tending me in the world in the shape of my Father and Mother, Thou didst abide in my mind, and before I fell into the deep sea called Jaganmaya and was drowned, Thou didst draw me by force to Thee and keep me at Thy Feet. O Arunachala, Consciousness Itself, such is the wonder of Thy Grace!

The Necklet of Nine Gems.

To the human mind there can be but two Entities (and no third) in what we call Existence: One is Sri Bhagavan, the Maharshi, Maker and Redeemer of the world, and the other the world itself. The Maharshi was born at 1 a. m. on the 30th of December, 1879, at Tiruchuzhi some thirty miles away from Madura. Now, how can this be? The two statements together make up an enigma. They involve the idea of the world being in existence prior to the Maker's birth in it.

True. But what harm or offence is there in presuming an enigma which we can neither escape nor disprove? Does it make much difference to say that Sri Bhagavan was never born and yet has ever been in existence? In that case we may not have known Him at all!

Sri Bhagavan's Existence and Operations being Mysteries, their explanation can have no finality in it. In explaining one Mystery we straightway land ourselves in others equally if not more perplexing. The riddle of the Creator and His Creation is very much like the proverbial riddle of the hen and the egg. In Eternity there is neither precedence nor subsequence. Time and Universe are coexisting contemporaries. Even so the time of Sri Bhagavan's birth, when viewed in the proper context of its immediate and remote circumstances, comprises within itself all antecedents and consequents from end to end of Time. And whether we

believe it or not His birth in the material sense literally signifies the birth of the whole Universe too. Only, that birth is not marked off on Time's calendar.

One clue to the paradox of His Existence is that He can take birth in the human way at any time, and yet in the Divine way exist at all times before and after His birth.

Consider what we mean by "1 a. m. on the 30th December, 1879." Does that expression convey to us any significance beyond that of a certain position of the hour—and minute-hands on the dial of a time-piece?—or of a certain page of the Christian calendar? Perhaps a few will picture to themselves the position of the real Time Machine, viz., the planetary system. Still fewer will read in the planetary position the All-pervading Will, in response to which the Incident of 1 a. m. of December 30, occurred.

Sri Bhagavan's birth in the world is not a stray event, nor the Moment of birth a solitary passing wave in the flow of Time. Even humanly speaking, both are a Perpetuity like Himself. When the Hour rang 1 a. m. at Tiruchuzhi, a Queensland monk had scarce counted a hundred beads at *daybreak*, a batch of Eastern pilgrims on board a vessel off Azores were on their knees before the *setting sun*, while (as we can very well conceive) some Californian wayfarers were bent in silent prayer over their *midday* fare. It is possible that not a single moment intervened among all these several pious employments. They were simultaneous. In fact, every fraction of the twenty-four hour's diurnal circle was mute in adoration of the Moment that saw the birth of Sri Bhagavan. Was It not a Perpetuity?— a Symbol of Immortal Devotion which Time owes to its Maker? Heavens pity us, mortals, who think of Sri Bhagavan or Anything in terms of birth and death, days, months and ages!

The next thing Sri Bhagavan did after birth was to grow up. And He grew up as others do. He grew up like man, bird, tree, and what not? He did not differ from others in the matter of upbringing, education, and all that. There were His loving mother and His devout father and other relations, who did their duties by Him exactly as mothers, fathers and relations do everywhere. For sixteen years He had His share of tears and smiles, so they say who saw Him then. His elders reproved Him when He did not do His class work. His play-

mates engaged Him in quarrels in which He gave as well as He got. In short, these sixteen years are a pretty old tale, as old as the Sacred Hill of Arunachala. Vainly do we trouble ourselves to trace any external sign of Divinity there. After all, why should the Divine differ from the Human when the Former undertakes to act the latter part? If It did could It be called Divine? Perhaps it would be more proper to call Sri Bhagavan's human part not an *acting* but a *being*. For *acting* is a dissembling which often fails in the part dissembled. But *being* is the very height of the actor's art, since in it the actor's part synchronises with his character.

So it happened that Sri Bhagavan, the Divine, was invisible in Sri Bhagavan, the human. Not all can see Sri Bhagavan when He manifests Himself to mortal sight. (Another paradox of mortal mind!) A few see him, some do not; some wonder why they should not see what the few have seen, and some wonder too if He be not self-deceived like themselves. Yet the wonder of wonders is He is in all of them: pitying the fallen and helping the faithful. Every man judges Sri Bhagavan by the measure of his own self. But no judgment of him can be right unless the judge transcends himself; even as no Faith is true until Disbelief disowns itself.

While routine life hedged Sri Bhagavan in on all sides during His boyhood He set little store on it. Life was to Him a giddy whirl of unstable things. There was nothing in it He could securely seize upon. The ceaseless flow of circumstances, within which His Body and Life blossomed, was like things seen outside the windows of a moving railway carriage. Of what use is it, He thought, to pamper a body that will sooner or later turn into dust? Of what use is it to please a mind which only seeks to please the body? The only lasting pleasure is in Permananee—Stability—Something that is *Achala* like a Hill—or in Nothing.

Yet while all things move or flow within and without each individual, his perceiving Self never changes. From childhood to old age there is an unbroken continuity in the perceiving "I". Neither sleep nor sickness, neither mutilation nor growth affects its sameness. It is an Impersonal Awareness, crystal-clear, in which the illusions of personal life are reflected. It is the basic monotone in which Life's myriad harmonies begin and end.

But these reflections belong to the mortal plane. Their value to a mortal is doubtful until their validity is proved by Death. The test of Immortality is to die and to survive Death. Sri Bhagavan resolved to experiment with Death. Once He simulated Death as far as mortal powers could. Again in 1912 He realised Death by completely withholding all vital processes of His Body for a quarter of an hour, a short period, indeed, when compared to the decades of time we waste in our lives, awake or asleep, but a pretty long one for Death to snatch with ease a million lives. But nothing happened to Him. He could not die. Breath may stop, pulses abandon their function, and body grow rigid and cold. But the living consciousness continues. That was the moral of His experiments.

But bare knowledge of a moral does not constitute morality, else every living thing should have been moral. Knowledge justifies itself when it becomes a part of the whole existence. Sri Bhagavan resolved to withdraw from the world to justify for its sake the truths He had discovered. Long had He cherished a devout fancy for "Arunachala". Both in sound and sense the Name echoed His Heart's Highest Aspirations. He left home for Arunachala (Tiruvannamalai) surreptitiously on a Saturday noon, 29th of August, 1896. He had three rupees in His pockets and nothing on Him except His daily wear. On the 1st of September He reached His Destination. During the journey He had pawned His ear-rings, eaten two bare meals and slept on cold ground. The little of money He still had He threw away along with His clothes and the sacred thread. What a pity for His terrestrial father if he had lived to see it!—and what a tragedy to His mother! Heavens wept literally to see Sri Bhagavan thus returning to the temples of the Sacred Hill, His Everlasting Home.

From then begins Sri Bhagavan's fuller experience of his Self. Immersed within Himself He spent months and years at the foot of Arunachala. At any rate, that is all that words can do to describe what He did at the Sacred Hill. But Sri Bhagavan knows He did more than He seemed to the world to be doing. Immersion of the Self within Itself is not what everyone can do. And he who does it, to the extent to which he succeeds, finds the Self expanding into a Universe, as vast as—rather vaster than—the one from which he withdrew. He finds himself the sole Monarch of it. For *him* the suns shine, stars keep watch and comets carry messages. All within himself! He is no more human with a

forgotten Past and an unknown Future, but a Living, All-inclusive Present. He is Sri Bhagavan, the Divine, the Self comprising all other selves and more!

This did not mean a change in Sri Bhagavan's outer Self — the world—which He is born to redeem, (and for all we know, has already redeemed). Sri Bhagavan and the world form One inconceivable Relativity in which what looks like Perpetual change to mortal eyes is to him a stable four (or more) dimensional Unity; the same as the picture which presents to the sight an illusion of movement or undulation, but proves to touch a plain and stable surface.

Sri Bhagavan is the Immutable Law. His Greatness is in preserving the Law and not in playing juggler's tricks of turning cocks into bulls and *vice versa.* Nor is Sri Bhagavan an exception to His own Law. Why should He be? When He sat for meditation, neighbouring urchins were not slack in their inherent mischief of laughing or throwing stones at Him. The vermin that infested His place of worship did not bite Him the less savagely because of His Holincss. Only *He* was unconcerned. Vermin and man are his children, equally dear to Him. He is their Feeder and Saviour.

Sri Bhagavan's kith and kin failed to understand Him when He suddenly disappeared from home. His conduct was construed as due to a fit of light-headedness common to boys of unstable temper. He was expected to return home with the return of better judgment. Alas, the expectation failed. He was suspected to have joined a dramatic troupe. A studious search was made for Him far and near in all places except His proper abode—the Heart. So nothing came out of the search. Behold their surprise when they saw Him two years later at Tiruvannamalai with matted hair, over-grown nails and sun-burnt complexion!—sunk deep in meditation!

An uncle fervently prayed to Him to come home. Mother wept bitter tears. But Sri Bhagavan, who knew home and tears as well as anybody else, remained unmoved like a Sphinx. After a great deal of importunity He vouchsafed to tell the mother in writing that she had rather leave Destiny have Its own way and abide by Its decision.

Was it not obstinacy, this unusual behaviour of His?

Not exactly. It was pitiful Necessity—imperious and inevitable. From end to end of the world, inside and outside man, is an unbending Will, which does everything man does, makes him do what he does not, and prevents his doing what he shall not. Sri Bhagavan saw in His mother's tears the futility of human sentiments set against a Cosmic Current. The Mother could no more make Sri Bhagavan leave His hermitage than She could induce Him to change His complexion or grow a supernumerary limb. Sri Bhagavan has not left the Sacred Hill of Tiruvannamalai since 1896. Why should he ?

There is an imperative Fixture of purpose in Sri Bhagavan's life and conduct, which appears as utterly indifferent to the world at some times, as at others it seems to melt into touching sympathy. Perhaps, every adjective we employ in describing Him does more justice to our own sentiments with regard to Him than His with regard to Himself. He is not the Duality we are. But this is certain : whether indifferent or sympathetic in either case the world gains by Him as it does from skies whether they are sulky or sunny. If by His renunciation His relation lost a kin, His austerities have made him a gain to the whole animate world. Pilgrims from all over the world flock to Tiruvannamalai for Sri Bhagavan's Darshan and are blessed with or without their knowledge. Mysterious are His ways with men. Though nothing unusual happens at the time of Darshan to a curious pilgrim, a mild surprise overtakes him later when he begins to notice subtle proclivities in his mode of living and thinking—nay, perhaps in external affairs too. The man who denied the fact of Sri Bhagavan's Divinity some time back grows a trifle cautious about this denial. He reads and hears about Sri Bhagavan ; ponders on what he reads ; rereads and broods. Behold, his very preoccupation has been doing for him a part of what Sri Bhagavan in person might do. Disbelief has given way to an awful feeling of 'Perhaps'. Furtive belief has uneasily fretted away into a frank desire for belief. Finally, one fine morning, the quondam disbeliever falls prostrate in a passion of tears before his own mental image of Sri Bhagavan seeking pardon for his erstwhile wandering mind. This is the unconfessed story of hundreds of people. This is also one of the ways in which Sri Bhagavan has been redeeming the world. Sins of whole lives are forgiven by one act of His Grace. Faith and hope are the only price the sinner pays for His forgiveness. There is nothing for man to do but to keep his hold firm on faith and hope even as a miser keeps his on the last pie of his hoarding.

There is a significance of high import in Sri Bhagavan's even tenor of life, which in more eventful lives is at best doubtful. His life is a demonstration of the great potentials that lie hidden in the most ordinary and unpromising souls. To read Him is to see the uniqueness of the unique, just as we see in a clod of earth the vital processes that make flower and fruit. We learn from Him what self-deceived shadows we are all, entombed in toiling body-minds—mere fantasies of a narrow dream called Life, spun out within a corner of His Superintending Watchfulness. The wary of us will question themselves, "Is this life a toilsome delusion? Who is to blame? Had we not rather blame ourselves who take the delusion seriously, when our better judgment asks us to wake up?" The warier of us will think further, "Whether delusion or reality, we cannot judge. Be it our joy to take it as it is, good and evil alike in good part, and surrender our judgment to Sri Bhagavan whose life has been to us a reassurance against gloom and despair. May His pleasure be our aim in what we think and talk, and His remembrance in what we do. He knows all our errors and sins. We err even to ask for deliverance. May His Grace be everywhere!"

One word more. Whatever may be written about Him, Bhagavan Sri Ramana, there is no such thing as knowing Him. Remembrance is all. May He be in the remembrance of all who seek the Truth about themselves!

IN HIM I FIND REPOSE

In Sri Bhagavan and Him alone
    All things agree nor ever oppose.
With stronger kinship than I own
    To myself, There I find repose.

In Sri Bhagavan if I be blind,
    I still can see, and only good;
If deaf, my ears will sooner find
    All Truth than hearing ever could.

In Sri Bhagavan is Far and Near;
    I need no toilsome journeys make.
In Sri Bhagavan I need not fear
    To die, for Death shall me awake.

* * * *

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

"KNOW THYSELF!" is the burden of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching, as it is the breath of His being. But Sri Bhagavan Himself is not merely in what we see of Him, nor merely in what we hear Him say. He is in the personal experience of those who see Him honestly in themselves. He is the Subject of the subject seeking the Truth. Till one can claim to know Him as He is, claim Him as one's own Silent Self of the self,—one has to hear what He says and know what He teaches.

Self-Knowledge is the way of the *Jnani* towards the Highest Good, the Universal Good. As an attainment it is the Pure Being or Brahman, One and Indivisible, the Substratum of all that exists. As a process it is the persistent inquiry into the uninquiring Self,—what it is, how and where it is,—a process in which the spirit that inquires attempts to get down to the level of the Subject of inquiry. The moment the level is reached, the process ceases and the Highest Good descends into the inquirer and bears him on in triumph into the Mighty Self, which is neither the inquirer nor the inquired into, but something which includes and transcends both. All searching perishes there into Attainment, and the Object of search becomes an ecstasy of first-hand Experience, it becomes the Subject, One and Absolute. It is the State where nothing is lost and everything is gained. It is the State where one gains all by losing the nothingness of the ego. It is the State complete and perfect. It is Bliss Supreme.

But alas, it is also a State each must find for himself or herself.

The question "WHO AM I?" is a razor's edge and cuts through all other questions that earthly imagination may conceive. All questions resolve themselves into it. The physicist who ponders on "What is light?" the beggar who piteously begs asking himself "Why must I beg?" and the prince who nightly broods "Why do my subjects rebel?",—all beg the same question in different ways. "Who am I?" is, therefore, the Question of questions and goes directly to the root of every problem and sums up the entire spirit of quest. Indeed, whatever be the object of man's quest, he cannot avoid the quest for the Self.

Let us first consider the physicist; who is prepared to, reduce everything into nothing,—than whom none is supposed to be less concerned with spiritual truths. What does he investigate into?

Light, (let us say).

Does he know how light is seen?

Of course. He presumes that he knows.

Is it the eye which sees light? Or is it the retina, or the brain-centre? If any or all of these see light, why is not light, perceptible to the lifeless corpse, which possesses the whole physical mechanism of perception?

Obviously, the act of seeing as well as the object seen have something to do with the Self that sees. But how it sees without its own physical attributes or even material existence is more than mortal mind can guess. The physicist knows that his learning and scholarship has some very intimate relation with his mind and intellect. But does he know what his mind and intellect are? Can the mind know why it thinks? Thinking why, it will continue to think but will never know the why. One thing is clear, that as long as one does not know what the seeing Self is apart from the act of seeing and the object seen, all seeing is mere guess-work, necessarily incomplete and inaccurate. It may be eminently practical, but it will be equally untrue. Inference based on incomplete data is as bad as investigation conducted with inaccurate instruments. The subject cannot help seeing the object in relation to himself. The nature of his own perceptive faculty must necessarily determine to some extent the nature of the object seen. The human eye sees light as self-revealing, whereas the eye of the owl sees it as darkness and sees darkness as light. How can the *subject* know exactly what the object is in itself, when he does not know himself? How dare he presume that what he knows of the object is really true? The Self is nearer to him than any object he may see or investigate into; without himself there is no object for *him* to see or investigate. How then dare he ignore himself, the subject, and try to know about the object?

The beggar and the prince are no better than the physicist. In a sense they too are investigators. They want to know why certain things are outside their control. The beggar is never sure of getting his food, and the prince obedience from his subjects. But do they ever inquire why and for whom they want anything? Who are they? They seem to know only their wants and not themselves. Then, is not the

prince who wants something he hasn't got as much a beggar as one who begs for something when he has actually nothing even for his physical sustenance? Really, is not the prince, full of desires seeking fulfilment, worse than the beggar? Because, having as much as he already has by virtue of his power and position, he wants something more; still he feels the want. The mind seems to conspire against itself. The Prince has his power and wealth, yet like the beggar's dog he meekly follows the beggarly mind. Some rare discriminating soul discovers the tragedy inherent in the situation. That is why, perhaps, a thoughtful prince or a mighty monarch,—a Buddha or an Asoka,—gives up his kingdom, and becomes a beggar. Who is the beggar and who is the prince? The prince who remained a beggar in his palace, or the Prince who became a beggar leaving the palace?

All want, pain, grief and fear are due to craving for things which are not strictly yours. The limpid stream of pure Consciousness called "I" is contaminated by throwing into it the rubbish of not-"I". Why, then, wonder that the simple self-awareness, the "I", the Self that you really are, has become a psychological mystery? Its very familiarity renders it paradoxically unknown, and makes you a stranger to yourself. The newly born babe, which takes time to recognise its limbs as its own, is perhaps nearer the truth about itself than adult man,—its wayward offspring,—who claims everything as his except himself. If all growth from childhood is a continuous deviation from true self-hood, when shall man get out of the wilderness and discover himself as the Monarch of all he surveys? When shall he know his own magnificence, that he is the Self Absolute in whose eternal being myriads of worlds rise, remain for a time and finally vanish?

In short, man is not the conception he creates of himself. Nor is the world what he thinks it to be; it is monumental lie, and if he runs after it he belies his true nature. Man as a Man is but the Perfection of Truth. But when he identifies himself with the body and the rubbish of the world, he becomes a monumental lie, assiduously built and vainly sustained. Let him, then, give up the world and its riches, take up the quest for the "I", the eternal Treasure within. Let him unlearn what he has so painfully learnt, and learn afresh. That which is his without learning. Truly, the Good Shepherd had learnt more than what all the learnedness of the libraries could teach. Oh, what does it profit man if he gains all the world but has lost his soul? Not all his learning and

wit will avail him to know who he is unless he ceaselessly brushes aside his thousand and one thought-processes and pursues the solitary needle-pointed quest of "WHO AM I?"

IN HIM I CEASE TO BE

What is the seeing Self and what the seen?
And what the linking means that lies between?
To see or know a thing can only mean
I am that thing which else had never been.

The act of sight includes the Self that sees,
The object seen and what between them is.
The total Being immanent in these
Is Self without a second, where I cease.



TO

SRI RAMANA

THE SILENCE DIVINE

Unheard Thou hearest all I hear,
From Thee returns nor word nor sound.
Of what use then my mortal ear
Unless it hear Thyself profound?

I live in Thy transcendent Light,
But Thee I keep within me hidden.
Of what use then my borrowed sight
That is to see its Source forbidden?

Thou knowest all the learned lore,
Surpassing men of school and college,
Of what use then my learning more
When Thou art outside my knowledge?

Let be then all my foolish pride
Transform'd or dead in Self Awakened,
Be all I am—not only Guide;
Make "I" a pronoun, Person Second.

—C. S. **Bagi, M. A.**
(Belgaum)



ABHAYASHTAKAM

भो ब्रह्मन् रमणेश ! तावकपदांभोजद्वये सांप्रतं
विज्ञाप्यं रहसीदमेकमधुना श्रोतव्यमित्यर्थये ।
अज्ञातं भुवि नाणुमात्रमपि ते सर्वज्ञचूडामणे-
र्वैक्लव्यं त्वननूदितं ननु नृणां मर्माणि निष्कृन्तति ॥ १ ॥

1. O Brahman, Lord Ramana, a wish I have to utter in secret at Thy Holy Feet. I pray Thee, hear it now. True, nothing on Earth remains unknown to Thee, the Foremost among the all-knowing. Yet, to keep unspoken what should be spoken, would eat away our hearts.

भीत्या त्वत्पदपंकजे श्रितवतां क्लेशप्रहाणैषिणा-
मत्रत्यैरुपचीयमानमनिशं प्रच्छन्नविद्वेषिभिः ।
दुर्वारप्रसरं भयं रमण ! नः क्षोभप्रदं चेतसः
स्वामिन्नाशयमूलतोऽथ वद्वाऽभीतिप्रतिज्ञावचः ॥ २ ॥

2. O Lord, O Master Ramana, we, afraid of worldly life with its evils and anxious to be freed from them, have sought refuge at Thy Feet. And yet some fear pursues us from our hidden foes; it nears; it grows irresistibly; it troubles us. Root it out, Lord, or else give us Sanctuary and give Thy word, 'FEAR NOT!'

संसाराह्वयनाटकस्य च भवान् सत्सूत्रधारायित-
स्स्वामिन् मृत्युभिया मृकण्डुसुतवद्भर्गाकृतिं तावकीम् ।
मूर्तिं भव्यधियो वयं शरणमित्याश्रित्य सेवामहे
किं वास्मास्वपि ते विहीनकरुणं युक्तं भयोत्पादनम् ॥ ३ ॥

3. O Lord, well Thou holdest all the strings of this world's puppet-show. Like Markandeya, fearing Death and taking refuge in Siva, in all humility we seek and serve Thy Glorious Being. Does it become Thee, Lord, to withhold Thy Grace and to cause us fear?

वेदान्ते क्वचिदाश्रुतं भगवतां भीतिप्रदत्वन्तु य-
स्तन्मायापरिकल्पितार्थविषयं तत्त्वार्थतां नाश्नुते ।
नोचेद्धन्त ! विजानतां तव कृपालेशाद्विमुक्तात्मनां
नूनं नैव घटेत भीतिरहितावस्थत्वमव्याहतम् ॥ ४ ॥

4. Here and there the Vedanta speaks of Brahman inspiring fear. But this is with reference only to objects created by *maya* (illusion), not with reference to Reality. Otherwise, where is the scope for the unobstructed freedom from fear realised by the great ones liberated by a particle of Thy Grace?

मायाक्लिप्तनामरूपकलना यावन्नृणां वर्तते
तावत्तान्समुपैति भीतिरिति हि प्रोवाच वाग्वैदिकी ।
अद्वैते परिनिष्ठितस्य महसि स्वे ते गताम्दृक्पथं
द्वैतान्नः कथमेतु भीतिरथवा ताः किन्निरर्था गिरः ॥ ५ ॥

5. The Upanishads say that fear will persist so long as the illusory perception of name and form persists. How can there still be fear of duality for us, who are within sight of Thee, who, firmly established in the non-dual Reality, shinest forth in Thine own peerless splendour? Or is this Upanishadic teaching of no significance?

कल्याणानि तनोतु कोऽपि गुरुराट् कैवल्यदानव्रती
व्यापन्नाभयसत्रदीक्षित इति ख्यातः कृपालुः क्षमी ।
सर्वानर्थनिदानमोहकलिलोद्भूतं भयं मानसं
किञ्च श्रीरमणः प्रमार्ष्टु भगवानित्येव नः प्रार्थना ॥ ६ ॥

6. Famed as one having taken the vow to grant Liberation to souls in bondage, and as being dedicated to giving sanctuary to the distressed, may the Great Master, beneficent and kind, make us prosperous. May Sri Ramana dispel from our minds all fear; the product of ignorance which is the root-cause of all misery. This is our prayer.

रमणभगवत्पादांभोजे सदा रमतां मनो
रमणभगवद्वक्त्रांभोजे मनः पिबतान्मधु ।
रमणभगवन्मूर्तिं दिव्यां मुहुस्स्मरतान्मनो
रमणभगवंत्पादाचार्यो ममास्तु परायणम् ॥ ७ ॥

7. May my mind ever rejoice in the Lotus-feet of Lord Ramana! May my mind drink the honey of words from His lotus-mouth! May

my mind ever meditate on His resplendent divine form! May the great Master Ramana be my final Goal!

शोणाद्रीश्वरसद्मराय यमिने मायागृहीतात्मने
स्वात्मस्थाय कृपारसार्द्रमनसे शान्ताय सन्यासिने ।
मग्नानां भवसागरे भुवि नृणामानन्दमुत्सर्जते
तस्मै श्रीरमणाय बोधगुरवे तन्म त्रिसन्ध्यं नमः ॥ ८ ॥

8. To Sri Ramana, the Supreme Teacher of Truth, the Holy Dweller in Arunachala, self-controlled, with body self-endowed through *maya*, steadfast in the Self, with mind melting in love, calm, ascetic, affording Bliss to those immersed in the ocean of *samsara*, salutations for ever and ever.

ध्यायेत् पद्मासनस्थं प्रमुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिरूपं
कौपीनालङ्कृताङ्गं हृदि किमपि महस्सन्ततं चिन्तयन्तम् ।
भासा स्वेनैव भान्तं गुरुकरुणदृशं साधुसंसेवितांघ्रि
सर्वश्रेयोवदान्यं रमणमुनिवरं शोणशैलेशरूपम् ॥

Ever meditate on Sri Ramana, the foremost of sages, Who is one with Lord Arunachala, and who is the giver of bliss to all, as seated in the lotus-pose, with a smiling face, embodiment of Lord Dakshinamurty, clad in loin-cloth, ever absorbed in the inexpressible Glory of the Heart, shining by His own light, with eyes full of grace and with devotees serving at His feet.

कृषीष्ट भगवानिष्टं पठतामभयाष्टकम् ।
विष्टभ्य भुवनं कृत्स्नं य ईष्टे रमणो गुरुः ॥

May the Master Sri Ramana Who pervades and sustains the whole universe, fulfil all the noble desires of those who recite this hymn.

आत्मविद्याभूषणं
श्री जगदीश्वरशास्त्रिविरचितम्

Atmavidyabhushanam
Sri Jagadiswara Sastri

SRI RAMANA

AND

OUR QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

By

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Everybody wants happiness untainted by sorrow. But we find few people obtaining such happiness. Looking at the phenomenal existence of ours we find that it is almost an invariable law that, like night alternating with day, happiness always alternates with misery. If it is in the nature of things that happiness must always alternate with misery then it would be impossible for anybody to obtain perpetual peace and happiness. But prophets, Sages and Saints, all the world over, have emphatically declared that it is possible to transcend this phenomenal existence of ours and to attain a state of perpetual peace and happiness untainted by sorrow. This they have declared, not as a theoretical possibility based on rational arguments, but as a fact of their own personal experience, as a state actually realised by them. They declare that Bliss is the very nature of man's true being, and to obtain perpetual happiness one has only to search for and abide in the primal state of one's true being—which is the Self. They declare that happiness does not lie in and cannot be obtained from any one of the countless objects of the mundane world. It is through sheer ignorance we 'fancy that happiness is obtained from them. The truth is, they declare, that every time one's desire gets fulfilled, the mind becomes introverted (ceases to get externalised), thus touching its source (though unconsciously) and for an instant experiences that happiness which is natural to the Self. Immediately, another unfulfilled desire rises in the mind and extroverts it. ,The mind thus losing its contact with the Self becomes unhappy again. If we can always firmly abide in the Self we shall constantly experience perpetual Bliss, which is the very nature of the Self. For thus firmly abiding in the Self, the Sages have also

prescribed practical methods, following which we may also realise such a state of perpetual happiness in our own lives.

Description of such methods we find recorded in all our ancient scriptures. But the main drawback of such written records is that in course of time men miss the spirit underlying these teachings and engage themselves in vain theoretical and verbal discussions. It is also notable that, during such periods of degeneration, great men, whom we call *Avataras*, appear on our earth to restore these methods to their original form, imparting life to them and enabling a vast number of people to attain the state of supreme Peace and Bliss through the right method. Such a one is Sri Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala. After realising and completely merging His own identity with the Supreme Self, He has designed to remain on this earth for the uplift of humanity and to help really ripe souls to attain the same state.

In India it is generally recognised that the help of a *Guru* is necessary for transcending this life of diversity, full of pain and misery, and reaching the supreme state of perpetual Bliss. To reach this state one has to transcend the mind. As any number of squares can never produce a cube, similarly no amount of mental activity can make one transcend the mind and reach the supreme state of egolessness. It is stated that, except at the feet of the Master and in His divine presence, it is impossible for the seeker to reach and abide in that primal state of pure Being or the Self, where the mind is entirely subdued and all its activity has completely ceased. Hence the necessity for the Grace of the *Guru*. But this Grace is eternal, ever present and ever active. We need have no doubt as to whether we shall obtain this Grace or not. To the question, "Has God or the *Guru* any solicitude for us?" Maharshi replies:—"If you seek either—they are not really two but one and identical—rest assured that they are seeking you with a solicitude greater than you can ever imagine." Sri Ramakrishna also declared:—"If you approach one step towards God, God moves ten steps towards you." But we must move one step. With the firm conviction that Grace is ever present, the seeker must, on his part, earnestly strive to qualify himself for this Grace. This striving of the seeker is called *Sadhana* and may take many forms as there are many recognised methods of approach to the Supreme, according to the moral and intellectual equipment of the seeker. Maharshi recognises many such methods. But he prescribes one particular method which he himself

calls the method *par excellence.* It is the method of Self-enquiry, the quest of the Self—*Vichara Marga.* This method is unique, simple and most scientific. It has no mystery about it. It does not demand any obedience to particular creeds or metaphysical theories. It starts from the very fundamental fact of our experience that "I exist" and directs us to find out this "I". Happiness is our true being. It is always with us here and now. Forgetting this we have strayed out from the primal Blissful state of our being and have thus enmeshed ourselves in misery and unhappiness. To obtain perpetual happiness we have only to find out and abide in the true state of our being—which is Bliss itself. Maharshi directs us to find out "Who am I?"

Do we know this "I"—which is ever present and without which no knowledge, not even existence, is possible? Even the greatest of the Western philosophers have confessed that whenever they tried to find the "I", they stumbled only on some state of the "I" but could never find the "I" itself. The majority of us, however, without any strictly critical examination, have unquestioningly assumed that "I am the body." Before engaging in the quest of the Self, this ignorant assumption has to be removed by strict and careful examination. Before proceeding to know what the "I" is, we have to find out what it is not. The body cannot be the 'I'. The body changes continually. It was small and it has grown bigger whereas the sense of "I"-ness remains always the same. I am the same identical I as I was years ago—though the body has changed enormously during this period. Even if a man loses a whole limb, the sense of "I"-ness in him is not even slightly diminished thereby. During sleep or a swoon, there is no consciousness of the body but on awaking the same identical "I" appears as before. Again, if the body were identical with the I-consciousness, I could never lose the I-consciousness during deep sleep, as the body was there all the time quite intact. On examining all reflex, automatic and habitual actions of the body (like walking etc.) it is found that these go on without any conscious participation of the "I". If the body were identical with the "I" then all such actions could not go on without the conscious participation of the "I". Moreover, the body is insentient like a log of wood and therefore cannot be the conscious "I".

Similar considerations will show that the mind is not the "I". The mind is changing very frequently whereas the sense of "I"-ness in me remains the same. The mind can be made an object of observa-

tion and therefore must be distinct from the observing "I". Again I try to still my mind but it does not come under my control showing that it is distinct from "I". During deep sleep or swoon there is no mind, but the "I" must exist; otherwise how could I get the sense of the identical "I"-ness after waking up? Thus the "I" is not the mind.

Now if I am neither the body nor the mind, what then am I? The problem is most fascinating. The "I" which is ever present, without which there can be no knowledge nor even existence, always eludes our grasp. To obtain a direct answer to this problem Maharshi gives out his unique method of self-enquiry. This method is not at all intellectual. No amount of intellectual analysis or study will ever reveal the "I" since it is above the intellect. It is not even necessary to form any hypothetical idea as to the final nature of the "I" or of the ultimate reality or whether the "I" is one with the Supreme or distinct from it. Says Maharshi—"Why speculate as to what will happen some time in the future? All are agreed that the 'I' exists. Let the earnest seeker first find out what the 'I' is. Then it will be time enough to know what the final state will be. Let us not forestall the conclusion but keep an open mind. Instead of indulging in mere speculation devote yourself here and now to the search for the truth that is ever within you".

Though not imperatively necessary, it will help us in preparing the proper mood for the search if we accept, on the authority of the Sages and the Scriptures, that we are always the Self, so that finding the Self is like finding the lion in a puzzle-picture of a jungle. Though the lion is always there we cannot find the lion so long as we look at the picture as a jungle. But if we withdraw our attention from the jungle and look intently for the lion, the lion appears to us never to be lost sight of again. The search for the Self—the truth behind our "I"—is a similar process. It is the ever-present reality. But so long as our attention is drawn away by the phenomenal world, we do not find it. When we withdraw the whole of our attention from the world of phenomena and direct it towards its own source, the Self reveals Itself spontaneously.

The process of finding the "I" is similar to the process of recollecting a forgotten thing. When we try to recollect a forgotten thing

we do not rake out, one by one, all the hidden contents of our mind—the number of which is legion—and go on rejecting each one of these, as not this, till we find the desired one. The true process of recollecting is to keep the mind quite still, only keeping the desire to recollect the thing at the back of the mind. When the conscious mind is thus kept quite still, the forgotten thing flashes forth of itself in the mind. There are two essentials in this process—a desire to recollect the forgotten thing (without which the forgotten thing will not appear in the mind) and keeping the surface mind quite still. In the quest of the Self also these are the two essentials: first, there must be a keen and earnest desire to know the Self and, secondly, with this will in the background, the mind must be completely stilled. The will to know the Self, which expresses itself as an intent, unbroken, watchful gaze within, is the dynamical element in the quest. In fact, this intense and steady watchful inward gaze forms the essence of this method. Simply stilling the mind without this is inoperative. On the other hand, this inward watchfulness, when steadily kept up, will itself still the mind and destroy all its latent tendencies to run after objects. The mind will be gradually made pure—reduced to its state of *Suddha Sattva*, in which state it firmly inheres in the Self. It is only when the mind is contaminated by the qualities of "activity" and "inertia" that it strays out from the Self and creates objects and becomes enmeshed thereby. We have to destroy this outgoing tendency of the mind and make it perfectly still.

Now, how are we to still the mind? If one thought is rejected another comes in its place and there seems to be no end at all. But there is an end. Says Maharshi:—"If you cling to yourself, say the I-thought, and when your interest keeps you to that single idea, other thoughts get rejected, automatically they vanish."

There can be no thought without attention, either voluntary or involuntary. If we withdraw our attention from a thought it vanishes. But the attention must have an object. To what then must it be directed? Maharshi directs us to fix our attention on the source of the "I"-thought. The "I"-thought is the very first thought. Every other thought rises after the rise of the "I"-thought and involves this "I"-thought. When I see, hear or think of anything, the "I"-thought is involved in every one of these operation, as, "I see, I hear, I think, etc." Without this "I" there can be no mental operations. Says Sri Ramana:—"When there is not the "I"-thought there will be no other thought. Until

that time, when other thoughts arise, the question 'To whom' (is this thought)? will call forth the reply 'To me'. He who pursues this closely, questioning 'What is the origin of the I'? and diving inwards reaches the seat of the mind within the Heart, becomes there the Lord of the universe." We are here directed to dive inwards following the clue of the "I-am"-ness to its source. He says, "Self-enquiry by following the clue of the *Aham-vritti* is just like the dog tracing its master by his scent. The master may be at some distant, unknown place, but that does not stand in the way of the dog tracing him. The master's scent is an infallible clue for the animal; and nothing else, such as the dress he wears or his build and stature etc., counts. To that scent the dog holds on undistractedly while searching for him and finally it succeeds in tracing him.

"Likewise in your quest for the Self, the one infallible clue is the *Aham-vritti*, the 'I-am'-ness which is the primary datum of your experience". This clue is infallible. By steadily and undistractedly following this *Aham-vritti* we are invariably led to its Source—the Self.

At the initial stages of the enquiry, innumerable thoughts will rise in the mind, due to past tendencies. We are directed to kill these thoughts at the source, by the method of Self-enquiry, by enquiring deeply within, "To whom has this thought occurred?" "For", says Maharshi, "if you would with acute vigilance enquire immediately as and when each individual thought arises as to whom it has occurred, you would find it is to 'me'. If then you enquire 'Who am I?' the mind gets introverted and the rising thought also subsides. In this manner as you persevere more and more in the practice of 'Self-enquiry' the mind acquires increasing strength and power to abide in the Source." Strong perseverance is necessary in this path. Day after day, month after month, year after year we have to steadily persevere in this enquiry. *Vasanas*, latent mental tendencies, have been accumulated and cultivated in us for ages past and long-cultivated tendencies can only be eradicated by long continued practice. As we persevere in this method, the tendencies of the mind gradually become weaker and ultimately die out. At the initial stages we may have some fixed hours of meditation but as we persevere in this process the mind becomes stronger and the mental tendencies which cause obstruction become weaker and weaker. We are then to keep the mind constantly turned within and fixed on the Self even while engaged in action. By a steady and continuous

practice of this method the mind will get absorbed in its own primal state. Such absorption leads to supreme Bliss and the Self reveals Itself spontaneously.

To the question whether it is possible for a householder to attain this Supreme State without relinquishing his home, Maharshi answers in the affirmative. He says:—"It is quite possible for the wise *grihastha*, who earnestly seeks Liberation, to discharge his duties in life without any attachment, considering himself as merely instrumental for the purpose, i. e., without any sense of doership. Such *karma* is not an obstacle in the way of attaining *Jnana*. Nor does *Jnana* stand in the way of discharging one's duties in life. *Jnana* and *karma* are never mutually antagonistic and the realisation of the one is not an obstacle to the performance of the other." What is necessary is perfect detachment. Attachment increases *dehatma-buddhi* and thus makes bondage stronger. Also the tendency of the mind to run after objects is made stronger by acquiescence and our attempts to still it will be frustrated. One should therefore cultivate a spirit of detachment and remain unconcerned and indifferent to external happenings. Performance of his duties in life with complete detachment and without any sense of doership will purify his mind and will thus rather help him in this path. When after assiduous practice of this method of Self-enquiry the mind becomes perfectly still, the seeker has only to keep his *lakshya* firmly fixed on the Self, and steadfastly maintain an inward prayerful watch, for the Self to reveal Itself. What will happen now does not depend on his efforts. As a matter of fact he cannot make any further effort. He will have simply to watch and wait. Grace will now manifest itself and do the work for him.

The best condition for the manifestation of Grace will be complete self-surrender. As one perseveres in this enquiry, one's "I"-consciousness gradually separates itself from the body and the mind and one actually perceives that all actions of the body and mind go on,—without the "I" taking any active part in these,—the I remaining an unattached observer of these actions. The conviction gradually grows in him that everything is being ordained and controlled by some higher power. The best thing now is to submit to this higher power. The ego, which has been carefully nurtured and strengthened for ages past, now offers itself as a willing sacrifice to be struck down by the Supreme and devoured by It.

The real Self, which has been all along there, waiting to take the *Sadhaka* in, now takes hold of him and fixes him in Eternity. He becomes identical with the Supreme Self and remains perpetually immersed in the Ocean of Bliss.

This is the method,—the method of enquiry, of *Atma-Vichara* enjoined by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi for Self-realisation. Self and Bliss are identical. So when one realises his own Self he remains perpetually immersed in Bliss. He becomes Bliss Itself. The finite mind cannot comprehend his state,—a state attaining which nothing remains to be attained and from which state no calamity, however great, can ever dislodge him. Even while engaged in action he remains immersed in perpetual peace and happiness.

The process is simple but requires the strongest perseverance, a perseverance which has been likened to that of the birds which attempted to dry up the ocean for recovering their eggs. But as in their case a superior being intervened, dried up the ocean and restored them their eggs, so in our case also, the Supreme Being in the form of the *Guru* intervenes and grants us the desired end, which we are incapable of achieving by our unaided efforts.

But there is an easier method available to earnest seekers of this present age. It is the association with a Sage—a *Jivanmukta*—one who has become identified with the Supreme even in this life. We find the following scriptural dictum: "To that fortunate one who habitually associates with Sages with a devout mind, of what use are all these observances for winning the highest goal? When the cool south wind blows giving relief from heat, say what is the use of keeping a fan in the hand?"

"The holy bathing places—which are but water—are never equal to those great ones; nor are the Deity forms—made of stone or earth—which are worshipped; through these a man gets purity of mind, if he has devotion, after immeasurable time; by the sight of the Sages he may become pure at once."

Such a Sage is now adorning the Arunachala Hill with his presence. He is easily accessible, always ready to inspire ardent seekers. No introduction or intermediary is necessary. It is a unique opportunity and privilege to the earnest seeker which he cannot afford to forego. Such an opportunity does not occur in every life.

To quote the words of Mr. Grant Duff:—

"Should those who have it in their power to visit the Asramam delay, they will have only themselves to blame in future lives...... Never perhaps in world history was the Supreme Truth—Reality, *Sat*,—placed within such easy reach of so vast a multitude. Here and now, through no special merit of our own, we may approach Reality. The sole difficulty is that of paying for the journey, there is no danger, and the reward is Knowledge of the Self."

So, brother, don't tarry; have the end of your human existence fulfilled by seeking the Divine Presence.

चेतः श्रीरमणं चिरन्तनगिरां गुंभैरगम्यं विभुं
शिष्यैराश्रमवासिभिर्मुनिगणैरासेव्यमानं सदा ।
आनन्दामृतसिन्धुवीचिनिचयैरान्दोलितं संततं
संचिन्त्यारुणशैलवासरसिकं भक्त्या कृतार्थी भव ॥

O Mind, by devout comtemplation on Sri Ramana, the Omnipotent, Who is unattainable even to the Vedas, Who is always served and adored by disciples, by those that stay in the Asramam and by groups of sages, Who is. rocked in the swing of waves of the sea of Bliss and Eternal Life, and Who delights in staying in Arunachala, by such contemplation, O Mind, may your highest purpose in life be fulfilled!

—*A Devotee.*

THE SAGE'S MESSAGE—THE NEED OF OUR TIMES

By

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As the poet says, the proper study of mankind is man. But wisdom lies in one making oneself the object of investigation, analysis and the sole object of quest and realisation. This is as much true today, in this "atomic age of scientific advance," as it was centuries ago. The life and teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi establish the truth of this statement beyond all possible doubt.

Life in modern times, in spite of its material prosperity and intellectual and artistic attainments, has not been conducive to human happiness. Hindu and Buddhist thinkers with singular unanimity declare that *avidya* (ignorance) is the source of our sorrow and suffering. The primary charactteristic of *avidya* is the ego-centered outlook of man. Consciously or unconsciously he gives preference to his individual needs, though they may conflict with the well-being of society. He developes an acquisitive instinct and looks upon every other being as his potential enemy. He clings to the things of the world, to his hearth and home, to his neighbours, to his community, in short to everything evanescent and unreal. He thus becomes a divided being through his ego-centric nature on the one hand and attachment to worldly things on the other. In this welter of conflicting claims he is tormented by fear, doubt and disbelief. He makes *the* world *his* world of incessant activity.

The tragedy of the whole situation is that in spite of man's mighty intellectual attainments he has added little to his moral stature. He has overrated the importance of the virtues of the head, to which he has entirely subordinated the virtues of the heart. Indeed, so dense is his *avidya* that he is not even conscious of the fact that all the while he has been in the darkness of ignorance. He therefore presumes he has himself the fullest moral worth and competence for reforming the society and the world, without bestowing a single thought on the

need of reforming himself, in the first instance. And the worst part of the tragedy is that when, due to his frustrated activity, he becomes sick of the world and the social conditions, he grows insensible to the moral values that should govern his conduct. Only when man understands the true aim of life will he find real and abiding happiness, the happiness which is the inalienable treasure hidden in the heart of every human being. Nothing reveals to us this aim of life more clearly, more powerfully, than the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Saints and sages are best studied in their day-to-day life. The study of a world-personality as that of Sri Ramana Maharshi is of the utmost value for us, provided it is first-hand and unbiassed. Though I had heard previously much about the spiritual pre-eminence of Sri Maharshi, it is only recently that I had the good fortune of coming into direct contact with him at the Hill of the Holy Beacon. My old and esteemed friend, Dr. M. H. Syed, led me to the sacred presence of the Sage, and it was no surprise for me to find among the assembled devotees men from distant countries like Europe and America. One of the most remarkable features about Sri Maharshi is that his teachings are mirrored to perfection in his life. He teaches the path of Self-enquiry, and with Self-enquiry he began his spiritual career. Abidance in the Self, declares the Sage, is the highest attainment, and it is in this State Transcendent does one find him at all times. It is a still more remarkable fact that this harmony we now find between the Sage's precept and practice had commenced with his boyhood life at the Hill of Arunachala.

One evening, some fifty years ago, while he was engaged in a routine class-work, he was impelled to enquire into the nature of the Self, the "I", which is the common denominator of all thought, speech and activity. With lightning speed he dived into his being and reached That, which is beyond the ephemeral ego. He knew at once the nature of his true Being, the Self Immortal. Within a few weeks he left his home without informing anybody his actual destination. To this youth of seventeen renunciation of the world and realisation of the Self came almost simultaneously; and it is indeed a mighty realisation which, from that sacred day when he came alone to Tiruvannamalai to this moment when thousands of seekers approach his gracious presence, has kept him steadfast to the life in the Spirit.

There are certain very unique features in relation to the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, which require special mention. The

first and foremost among them is the simplicity of his spiritual message. He does not preach a complicated code of *sadhana*, but declares that man has merely to realise his inherent nature which is Eternal Bliss. This simplicity of his teaching may be explained by the fact that the Sage himself had his realisation in its prestine purity and without the prop of scholastic learning. Secondly, his teachings have a strong rational appeal, evidently because his own realisation, being based entirely on his own experience, is independent of all extraneous authority. It is due to this rational appeal that we find today men of all castes and creeds, of all races and religions and from distant parts of the globe paying their homage to the venerable Sage.

Perhaps there is no instance in history of a sage, who, during his life-time, had so influenced the thoughtful aspirants in his own country as well as in foreign lands, while he himself did not stir for more than fifty years from the place he chose for his abode. What has appealed to me most is the divinity and grace that radiates from the countenance of the Sage, who captivates the heart of the educated and illiterate, of the young and old, the prince and the pauper, men, women and children, nay even animals and birds. Perhaps all of them find, for the nonse at least, reflected in their own heart the divinity realised by the Sage.



BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA
THE WHITE RADIANCE OF TRUTH

By
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There is something too simple, too self-evident in Bhagavan Sri Ramana's teachings. The pious devotee finds little opportunity for emotional indulgence of any sort. The intellectual finds that the Sage relegates to a secondary place all intellection, as a mere reflected lustre. The man of action, burning with a zeal to transform the community, finds the Maharshi coldly disapproving of his zeal, as still being ego-centred; and asks: "Is not this the same old supineness that has made us, Hindus, so helpless and abject?"

We all, with our various temperaments and endowments, seek in religion a mere sublimation of our favourite activities. We are so much encased within them that life is worth while, nay, even intelligible, to us only in terms of these. But to the Bhagavan all temperaments and endowments, and all the activities they inspire, are so many limitations on the Reality which is ourselves. His is the bright colourless light that annihilates all colours, only because it transcends them by absorbing them into itself. Here is the type and symbol of that final mystery which Sri Bhagavan, being of the line of our Upanishadic seers, embodies and expounds: a Reality whence arise all qualities and all actions, and yet which is itself without any quality or action. As the central brightness flows outward, its "light thickens" and at its periphery is a wealth of many colours. But the colours which enthrall us are but a scattering and a weakening of the light.

This is not to condemn the colours as false. Where shall the Knower find any falsity to condemn? Things are false only in so far as they are partial; and there is nothing partial but strives, consciously or not, to transcend its partiality. "All things pray," says Proclus, in the sense that all things, even inert matter and unconscious life, strive to fulfil themselves. And there is no man

so debased but he seeks the Atman. Yagnavalkya says "It is not for the sake of beings that they are loved, but for one's own sake that they are loved." In quest of his own Atman, striving to attain his own inherent freedom, power and dignity, does the drunkard seek his drink-pot, and the miser clutch at gold. The patriot and the philanthropist, too, seek other men's good only because, in reality, they seek their own Atman—though they may not always so define the object of their quest to their own consciousness.

But unconscious effort is both uncertain and uneconomical: it fluctuates and it wastes energy. Hence the need, if only that we might function efficiently, for even a tentative knowledge of that Absolute which we all seek, whether knowingly or not. The birth of this knowledge is a crucial moment in our lives; all effort thereafter wings its way straight to its purpose, as all effort before it was at best a fumbling. This is the new birth without which one cannot see the Kingdom of God; this is the possession which entitles us to receive more and more, and the lack of which renders us liable even to forfeiture of whatever else we have. Sri Bhagavan uncompromisingly sets the transcending of personality, the realisation of pure, impersonal consciousness, as the goal of all our effort, devotion and enquiry. This is the one thing needful, and the virtue in all other things is that they tend towards it. This is the citadel of Truth, where all is peace.

It is not here that the battle rages, but it is only from here that we can view the disposition of the forces at the outworks and learn how, at our station, we can fight intelligently, purposively. Sri Bhagavan does not summon us all straightaway to take our places in this citadel, does not ask us immediately to desert our station in the battle of life: many are the would-be recluses, mere fugitives, whom he has ordered back to their posts. But he teaches us the *raison d'etre* of all this turmoil. But for the knowledge he vouchsafes, our patriotism will become a prison house; our loyalties, so many shackles; our enthusiasms, blazing brands in the hands of maniacs. Aye, our very virtues will bind us hand and foot and deliver us into the keeping of the enemy of all virtues, egoism.

So is it with devotion. Sri Bhagavan spares no illusion, however noble or consoling. He declares that a personal God who makes himself visibly present is only a creation of the mind, though of a mind set in

the proper direction. And yet, when a devotee complained that he could not practise the higher mode of contemplation, that of the Formless, Sri Bhagavan rebuked him and advised him to adopt what came natural to him. He confronted a Muslim controversialist with the question how he, who identified himself with his body, could look down upon the devotee who invested God with a form.

Sri Bhagavan is among the most severely intellectual of our sages. And yet he warns us that the *idea* of the Absolute is only, to use the words of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, the correlative of the relative. It is still a category of thought, whereas the final realisation is the annihilation of the mind and all its categories. How shall that which shines with borrowed light, illumine the source of its brightness?

Yes, there is an austerity about Sri Bhagavan's teaching. He ever dwells in "the white radiance of eternity" and will not tint that light to suit our weak eyes. The utmost he will do is to rebuke those who jeer at the effects that result from the limitations of our vision. Once he declared that there was no difference between his teaching and that of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, that there *could* be none. And yet, we may not be wrong in believing that there is a difference between them, not in what they have taught, but in the manner of teaching it. From every point in the orbit of spiritual life, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa has beaten a path to the central illumination, whereas Sri Bhagavan rarely moves out of the centre. We need both these kinds of Teachers: those who assure us that we *can* advance even from where we are, and point to the near-by path that leads us *from* our various places; and those who warn us that we *must* advance and point to us the distant goal *to* which we must all journey, if we are to experience Reality. They both set the same goal and they both recognize the gradations of the spiritual ascent. Sri Bhagavan has not denied the values of relative life, but he is concerned only to tell us whence these values derive their validity, to assert the colourlessness of the light from which issue all colours.

THE PLACE OF BHAKTI IN THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMANA

By

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(Manjeshwar)

The quintessence of the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi is *Atma-vichara* (आत्मविचार) the enquiry "Who am I?", whereby one arrives at the Knowledge of the Self which is God. This is briefly set forth in his *Upadesa Sarah* (उपदेशसारः)—

अहमयं कुतो भवति चिन्वतः ।
अयि पतत्यहं निजविचारणम् ॥

Enquire whence does this "I" arise. Then the "I" vanishes. This is true enquiry.

अहमि नाशभाज्यहमहंतया ।
स्फुरति हृत्स्वयं परमपूर्णसत् ॥

When the "I" vanishes, then in the heart shines spontaneously the "*I-I.*" This is the Infinite Being.

As to God-Realisation, the cryptic statement runs thus:—

वेषहानतः स्वात्मदर्शनम् ।
ईशदर्शनं स्वात्मरूपतः ॥

Seeing the Self, its garb removed, is to see the Lord in the form of one's own Self.

This is clearly the Path of Knowledge (ज्ञान) pure and simple. Therefore, the question directly arises as to whether there is any room for *Bhakti* (भक्ति) or Devotion in the life and teachings of the Sage.

Before examining in detail the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, let us have a peep into his early life. Sri Maharshi's Realisation is

singularly free from all traditional or scholastic influences. The family to which he belonged followed merely the general Saivite tradition common to all Brahmin families in South India. His father was a prosperous pleader, and his two paternal uncles were similarly engaged in secular life. Venkataraman (that was the name of the Sage in his boyhood) studied in the American mission school at Madura, but he was so indifferent to his studies that even though he got promoted from class to class by virtue of his sheer intellectual brilliance, book-knowledge had the least influence on the early life of the Sage. Therefore, it is to the inward being of young Venkataraman that we will have to trace in order to find the source of his later spiritual growth. Let us examine the few events that led him to the great destiny that awaited young Venkataraman.

Quite casually he met one day an elderly relative and asked him the usual, *formal* question, "From where are you coming?" "Arunachalam" was the matter-of-fact reply. The boy was in no religious mood,—he never was at any time previous to that day. The meeting with the elderly relative did not take place in a temple or any other place of worship, and there was nothing particularly religious about the elderly relative himself. Yet, no sooner Venkataraman heard the name Arunachalam than he felt transported to some unknown regions of spiritual life. The sarcastic reply the relative gave on further enquiry about Arunachalam chilled the glow the youth felt within his breast. Why the glow was at all felt transcends intellectual explanations. And that the glow was real was proved beyond doubt within an year of its first manifestation.

It was also by "chance" that some months later Venkataraman happened to look into the book *Periyapuranam,* which some elderly member of his house brought for his own study. This was the first religious book Venkataraman read with all his attention. Then too, the reader may note, he studied the book all by himself (being a prose work in Tamil containing the stories of Saivite Saints) and under nobody's guidance. The spiritual fervour that had animated the life of those Saints gripped the very being of Venkataraman, but as soon as he finished reading the book, that ecstasy passed away. For the next six months the boy led the life of a common schoolboy. Then took place the one and only decisive event in the life of Venkataraman; and all subsequent events find their explanation only on the basis of this one event.

Some six weeks before he left Madura for good, Venkataraman had a sudden experience of "death", preceded by an unmistakable fear that he was about to die. The sole concern of his mind was to solve the problem. What was dying? By his own inward experience he found that death pertains to the physical body only, and that the "I" felt as his very being is the deathless Spirit. Several years later when the Sage was asked about the nature of the experience he had at Madura, he gave two very important clues. Firstly, that experience revealed to him his true spiritual Being. Secondly, that direct Knowledge he obtained without the aid of anything external to himself has continued from that moment right up to now without either increasing or diminishing during all these fifty years. To put it in other words, the Sage himself declares he did no kind of *Sadhana* (साधन) all his life. Why the subsequent events happened in the way they did, or why the next six weeks of his life at Madura were entirely different from his previous schoolboy life it was previously can have no explanation on the intellectual plane, *except* that some such thing should have followed the realisation of one's trans-mundane existence. When the conviction is true and unmistakable that one's existence is independent of the body and the world, all relations pertaining to worldly life must fade away. This was just what took place during the six weeks Venkataraman was in Madura after his "death-experience". It is of the utmost interest to study the sudden and complete change that came over Venkataraman's schoolboy life.

Two were the outstanding features of this new life. Firstly, without any preliminary intellectual knowledge about *dhyana* (ध्यान) and other similar spiritual practices, Venkataraman very often threw his books aside and became absorbed in meditation. Secondly, whereas formerly he would rarely go to the temple of Sri Minakshi Sundareswara, and that too in the company of many friends, after he awoke to new life, he would repair thither almost every evening and always alone, and stand before the sacred images for a long while, when waves of emotion would overcome him, and he would pray for the descent of Grace of Iswara (ईश्वर) upon him so that his devotion might increase and become perpetual like that of the sixty-three Saints; or mostly he would not pray at all but let the Deep within flow into the Deep without, and tears would mark the overflow of the soul. Maharshi was asked why he felt any need to pray when he had known the death-

less Spirit as his own being (through the death-experience). He explained that as a result of that experience he knew he was not the body; but the *suddha manas* (शुद्धमनस्) with the aid of which he had that knowledge, did not lose its identity and therefore sought a fresh *alambana* (आलम्बन) in the place of *dehatma-buddhi* (देहात्मबुद्धि). At that time he had not yet heard of Brahman (ब्रह्मन्) or *samsara* (संसार), he had no desire to avoid rebirth or seek Release, to obtain dispassion or seek Salvation. He had no idea that there was a Substance or Impersonal Real underlying everything and that himself and *Iswara* (ईश्वर) were both identical with It. It is clear, therefore, that while young Venkataraman did not know that he was the Absolute Being, he did not feel he was a *jeeva* (जीव) struggling in *samsara* (संसार). There was no personal prayer and much less a verbal articulation implied in *guna-mahimanuvarnana* (गुणमहिमानुवर्णन), *stotra* (स्तोत्र) *puja* (पूजा) *japa* (जप) etc.

The question then remains as to why he felt the emotion in the temple in the presence of the sixty-three Saints, and if he felt such emotion elsewhere. We have already seen how the youth felt the first glow of emotion on the casual hearing of the name of Arunachala uttered by a distant relative. Again, while he was reading *Periyapuranam*, his being passed through all the emotions of sudden accession of faith, deep love of God, the bliss of self-abnegation and communion with the Divine, which marked the thrilling lives of the sixty-three Saivite Saints. In both these cases there were no objective images of God. It was the spiritual and mental make-up generated by the study of the lives of the Saints and supported by the inherent purity of the boy's life that expressed itself in devotion, when, standing before the idols of the sixty-three Saints in the Madura Temple, he sought the Grace of the Lord that his life too might be as pure and noble as those of the Nayanmars. Whatever influence the temple-going had exercised on the spiritual development of the boy, the most remarkable fact concerning Sri Ramana's life is that his devotion to Sri Arunachala is not attributable to any kind of external influence, thus eliminating even at the outset the cast-iron duality of the worshipper and the worshipped so commonly associated with the lower forms of *Bhakti*-cult. His fifty years of transcendental life at the Hill of the Holy Beacon is positive proof of the fact that that love and devotion which prompted him to leave his home for good was of the highest and purest type. He scribbled a small note referring to his departure. It reads as follows:—

I have, in search of my Father, according to His command, started from this place. On a virtuous enterprise indeed has *this* embarked. Therefore, for this act none need grieve; nor to trace *this* out need money be spent.

Thus,

As one can see from the original Tamil letter (which is still preserved at Ramanasramam), the words "in search of my Father" express an after-thought and were actually written after he had completed writing some of the subsequent words. From what external source could have come this command? None. Who vouchsafed him the assurance that the enterprise was a virtuous one? None. Who can say how he came to conceive of Arunachala as his Father? Why did the "I" with which the note began become "this" in the second sentence? And why was no reference at all made either to the "I" or "this" at the end of the epistle, where instead of the writer's signature we find only a few dashes? True devotion is nothing but the loss of individuality in the supreme consciousness of the Divine. The quick loss of his individuality in the surging tide of devotion to Lord Arunachala at that crucial moment of the boy's life is well portrayed in the gradually attenuated reference to himself in the short letter which was perhaps the first and certainly the last Venkataraman ever wrote in his life. After three days of journey he reached his Father's abode, and in His presence in the ancient temple of Arunachala, Venkataraman made his final and absolute surrender. He addressed the Lord saying, "According to Thy command I have come, and in Thee I take refuge. Do with me what Thou pleasest." This act of supreme devotion is well described in the words of *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, Aphorisms 2 and 7:

सा त्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा । (Sutra 2.)

It is of the nature of greatest love to the Lord.

सा न कामयमाना निरोधरूपत्वात् । (Sutra 7.)

It would not desire anything that would be of the nature of repression (of desires).

What did the youth do after that appeal to Arunachaleswara? Did he go into the temple repeatedly as he did at Madura? Did he take

to some ritualistic form of worship during set hours of the day, spending the rest of the time in common avocations of life? Did he go on singing in praise of the Lord, extolling His divine qualities, praying for His grace and visual manifestation, etc.? Nothing of the kind. Indeed, he did not go into the *Sanctum Sanctorum* for months together after his first visit. He had no need for any verbal forms of prayer, and he took no particular attitude of devotion. At one stroke young Venkataraman transcended through **स्मरणासक्ति**, **आत्मनिवेदनासक्ति**, and **तन्मयासक्ति**, the other modes of devotion, described thus by the 82nd Aphorism of *Sri Narada Bhakti Sutras*:—

1. **गुणमाहात्म्यासक्ति** 2. **रूपासक्ति** 3. **पूजासक्ति** 4. **दास्यासक्ति** 5. **सख्यासक्ति** 6. **वात्सल्यासक्ति** 7. **कान्तासक्ति** 8. **परमविरहासक्ति**

The transcendental state of Silence the youth attained soon after he reached Tiruvannamalai can be explained only on the basis of the intuitive knowledge he had of the "I" as the deathless Spirit. He knew nothing of the academic descriptions *Sastras* give of *sravana* (**श्रवण**), *manana* (**मनन**), *nididhyasana* (**निदिध्यासन**), etc. No sooner did he sit in meditation than he fell into a state of *Samadhi*, transcending speech and thought. Effortlessly his mind was drawn to the Self Eternal and in That it was absorbed.

The above facts reveal the unique synthesis of *Jnana* (**ज्ञान**) and *Bhakti* (**भक्ति**) in Sage Sri Ramana's life. His teachings explain this synthesis in clear terms. In "*Who am I?*" which contains the earliest spiritual instruction the Sage gave (in 1901 & 1902) he says, "Verily the Self alone is the world, the 'I' and God. All that exists is but the manifestation of the Supreme." "Love unbroken like a stream of oil is devotion, and the man of wisdom realises through Love that the Lord is none other than the Self. The devotee, though considering Him to be apart, still merges in the Self. One whose love of the Lord is continuous and unbroken like a stream of oil, is sure to be merged in the Self, though not desired by him." (*Sri Ramana Gita, Ch. XVI*) "The same point is restated in a different form in *Maharshi's Gospel*:—"The eternal, unbroken, natural state of abiding in the Self is *Jnana*. To abide in the Self one must love the Self. Since God is verily the Self, love of the Self is love of God; and this is *Bhakti*. *Jnana* and *Bhakti* are thus one and the same. . . . The Inner Silence is self-surrender. And that is living without the sense of ego." "In order to attain

that state of supreme Quiescence or *Mouna* (मौन) transcending speech and thought," explains the Sage in *Spiritual Instruction*, "either the Path of Knowledge or *Vedanta Marga* (वेदान्तमार्ग) which leads to the annihilation of the ego, or the path of Devotion or *Bhakti Marga* (भक्तिमार्ग) which results in the destruction of 'my' and 'mine', is equally effective. Therefore, there can be no doubt that the Goal according to either path is one and the same." To quote again from *Maharshi's Gospel*, "Whether you practise *Dhyana* (ध्यान) on God or on the Self, it is immaterial; for the result is the same. You cannot by any means escape the Self. It is impossible for you to see God in all without seeing Him in yourself. . . . Either seek the Source of the ego, so that it may vanish, or surrender yourself so that it may be struck down. Self-surrender is the same as Self-knowledge, and either of them necessarily implies self-control. The ego submits only when it recognises the Higher Power. . . . There is no difference between *Jnana* and absolute surrender to the Lord, that is, in thought, word and deed. To be complete, surrender must be unquestioning; the devotee cannot bargain with the Lord or demand favours at His hands. Such entire surrender comprises all; it is *Jnana* and *Vairagya*, Devotion and Love."

In trying to understand Sri Ramana's Realisation in the light of his life and teachings, there remains one important question to be considered. While Sri Bhagavan's teachings offer the quintessence of Advaita Vedanta, his *Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala* appear to sanction the view that his Realisation was *through* Devotion which involves *dvaita* (द्वैत) or duality. While considering this point we must avoid the mistake that is very commonly made by those who are not closely acquainted with the life and teachings of the Sage. On reading the Five Hymns with their intensely personal strain, one gets the impression that it is through the singing of such hymns young Ramana overcame the blemishes of the mind and obtained the Grace of Arunachala considered as a Personal Deity. Some facts have already been stated above to meet this point of view. The knowledge of the deathless "I" he realised spontaneously at Madura was not the result of some attitude of devotion he cultivated towards Sri Arunachala. Indeed even the devout visits he paid to Meenakshi Sundareswara Temple followed as a result of that transcendental experience and not *vice versa*. After coming to Tiruvannamalai, except for the few moments he stood in the *Sanctum Sanctorum* to report his arrival to his Father, he felt no need for making verbal

prayers to Sri Arunachala. He attained *Samadhi* so effortlessly, so naturally as soon as he sat in meditation, that singing in praise of the Lord would have proved purposeless and even impossible. How then did the Sage come to write the Five Hymns? Herein lies the importance of knowing the circumstances under which the first of the Five Hymns, *Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*—first also in time-sequence came to be written.

It was about the year 1914, nearly 18 years after Sri Ramana's attainment of *Atmanishtha* (आत्मनिष्ठ) or steadfast abidance in the Self, when he was living in one of the caves up the Hill, while a group of mendicants offered him their services, that the occasion rose for composing the verses of *Aksharamanamalai*. Mendicants when they go a-begging for alms (almost invariably cooked food, भिक्षान्न), sing in chorus some song in praise of the Lord, and those *sadhus* who were with the Sage entreated him to give them a ballad on Sri Arunachala. The Sage composed the lines accordingly, and for the purpose of easy remembrance the first letters of the verses follow the sequence of the Tamil alphabet. Therefore, both from the internal and external evidence it is clear that the very first Tamil poem composed by Sri Ramana was for a particular purpose and was not at all a sort of personal prayer to a Deity sung day after day in order to achieve some spiritual good not yet realised by the votary. Even in this ballad-like hymn, we find three strands of thought,—1. which does not admit the duality of the worshipper and the worshipped, 2. which necessarily admits such duality, and 3. which admits an antecedent duality which ceased later.

The following are instances of the first line of thought, declaring absolute identity of the Sage with Lord Arunachala.

1. **Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, O Arunachala! (1. a)**

2. **Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who dwell on their spiritual identity with Thee, O Arunachala! (1 b)**

3. **One art Thou without a second; who then could dare elude Thee and, come in? This is only Thy jugglery, O Arunachala! (12)**

4. **Blazoned as the Devourer of Thy votaries, how can I survive who has embraced Thee, O Arunachala? (24)**

5. **"Reality is nothing but the Self;" is this not all Thy message, O Arunachala? (43. c)**
6. **When I took shelter under Thee as my One God, Thou didst destroy me altogether, O Arunachala! (48)**
7. **Hast Thou not bartered cunningly Thyself for me (for my individuality is lost)? Oh, Thou art death to me, Arunachala! (62)**
8. **The moment Thou didst welcome me, didst enter into me and grant me Thy divine life, I lost my individuality, O Arunachala! (95)**

The following are verses from the same Hymn which suggest the duality of the worshipper and the worshipped.

1. **Entering (my) home and luring me (to Thine), why didst Thou keep me prisoner in Thy Heart's cavern, O Arunachala? (8)**
2. **Was it for Thy pleasure or for my sake Thou didst win me? If now Thou turn away, the world will blame Thee, O Arunachala! (4)**
3. **Escape this blame! Why didst Thou then recall Thyself to me? How can I leave Thee now, O Arunachala? (5)**
4. **Display Thy beauty for the fickle mind to see Thee for ever and to rest (in peace), O Arunachala! (8. a)**
5. **The strumpet mind will cease to walk the streets if only she finds Thee. Disclose Thy beauty then and hold her bound, O Arunachala! (8. b)**
6. **After abducting me if now Thou dost not embrace me, where is Thy chivalry, O Arunachala? (9)**
7. **Does it become Thee thus to sleep when I am outraged by others, O Arunachala? (10)**
8. **Even when the thieves of the five senses break in upon me, art Thou not still in my heart, O Arunachala? (11)**
9. **Tear off these robes, expose me naked, then robe me with Thy love, O Arunachala! (30)**
10. **Unless Thou embrace me, I shall melt away in tears of anguish, O Arunachala! (34)**
11. **Unless Thou extend Thy Hand of Grace in mercy and embrace me, I am lost, O Arunachala! (51. a)**
12. **Enfold me body to body, limb to limb, or I am lost, O Arunachala! (51. b)**

13. **In my unloving self Thou didst create a passion for Thee, therefore forsake me not, O Arunachala! (60)**
14. **Espouse me, I beseech Thee, and let this mind now wedded to the world be wedded to Perfection, O Arunachala! (69. b)**
15. **Let us embrace upon the bed of tender flowers, which is the mind, within the room of the body (*or* the Ultimate Truth), O Arunachala! (82)**
16. **Let us enjoy one another in the House of Open Space, where there is neither night nor day, O Arunachala! (91)**
17. **As snow in water, let me melt as Love in Thee, Who art Love itself, O Arunachala! (101)**

Even in the above verses, the stress is not at all on duality but on its loss through union.

Destruction of individuality is clearly indicated in the third set of verses given below.

1. **Let me, Thy prey, surrender unto Thee and *be consumed*, and so have Peace, O Arunachala! (28. a)**
2. **I came to feed on Thee, but Thou *hast fed on me*; now there is Peace, O Arunachala! (28. b)**
3. **When I melted away and *entered* Thee, my Refuge, (I found) Thee standing naked, O Arunachala! (59)**
4. **Regard me! Take thought of me! Touch me! Mature me! Make me *one with Thee*, O Arunachala! (63)**
5. **Thou shinest selfless, *sapping the pride* of those who boast of their free-will, O Arunachala! (77)**
6. ***Thou hast* removed the blindness of ignorance with the unguent of Thy Grace, and *made me truly Thine*, O Arunachala! (84)**
7. ***Thou didst* take aim (at me) with darts of Love and then *devour me alive*, O Arunachala! (92)**
8. **Watching like a spider to trap me in Thy Grace, *Thou didst* entwine me and when imprisoned *feed on me*, O Arunachala! (103)**

In passing we may note as a matter of academic interest that the second set of verse's quoted above express the sentiment known as *Kantasakti* (**कान्तासक्ति**), described also as *Madhuribhava* (**माधुरीभाव**). In that state the devotee assumes the role of the bride and conceives the Lord of devotion as the Bridegroom. It would not be fantastic to say

that the experience of sudden "death" Venkataraman had at Madura was the imperative call of the Lover to His darling, leading soon thereafter to the actual "enticement". It was an all-consuming love, and, in its perfection attained within two months of the first call, it wiped out the individuality of the beloved and culminated in *tanmaya-bhava* (**तन्मयभाव**).

In the other four hymns composed by Sri Ramana later on the emphasis is more on the path of *Jnana* or Self-enquiry than on a mystic emotional appeal to the Lord. But the reader must not make the mistake of interpreting this emphasis on Self-enquiry in later hymns as a development of *Bhakti* in the *Aksharamanamalai* into *Jnana* of the later compositions. Because, more than ten years prior to the compositions of *Aksharamanamalai*, the Sage gave his message of *Atma-vichara* in "*Who am I?*" and in "*Self-Enquiry*". In the latter book (written about the year 1901) the Sage gives the clearest exposition of the all-comprehensive character of Self-enquiry.

> **Fixing the mind on the Self or the "I" abiding in the Heart is the perfection of *Yoga*, Meditation, Wisdom, Devotion, *Japa* and Worship. *Since the Supreme Being abides as the Self, constant surrender of the mind by absorption in the Self is said to comprise all forms of worship.* . . . . . Vedantists consider it a sacrilege to regard the One Creating, Sustaining and Absorbing Supreme Self as a conceptual deity like Ganapathi, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheswara and Sadasiva. We project ourselves into the idols and worship them because we do not understand true inward worship. Therefore, the Knowledge of the Self, which knows all, is Knowledge in perfection.**
>
> **Distracted as we are by various thoughts, if we continually contemplate the Self, which is itself God, this single thought will in due course replace all distraction and itself ultimately vanish; the pure Consciousness that alone finally remains is Realisation of God. This is Liberation. Never to be heedless of one's own all perfect, pure Self is the acme of *Yoga*, Wisdom and all other forms of spiritual practice. Even though the mind wanders restlessly, concerned in external matters, and so becomes forgetful of its own Self, one should be alert and think thus, "This body is not I. Who am I?" Enquire in this way, turning the mind backward to its primal state. *The enquiry "Who am I?" is the only method of putting an end to all misery and ushering in supreme Beatitude. Whatever and however it may be said, this is the whole truth in a nutshell.*"**

It is, therefore, clear that Sri Ramana does not countenance the theory of duality as an essential aspect of the Reality sought by all aspirants. Nevertheless, he does appreciate the weakness of the unregenerated mind which is unable to give up its extroverted out-look. Herein lies the explanation for the various types of *sadhana* explained in *Upadesa Sarah*.

कायवाङ्मनः कार्यमुत्तमम् ।
पूजनं जपश्चिन्तनं क्रमात् ॥ ४ ॥

Worship done with the body (पूजन), that is, ceremonial act of worshipping God, worship done with the voice (जप), that is, uttering God's Name, and worship done with the mind (चिन्तन), that is, meditation on God, are all excellent, and they excel each other in this order.

जगत ईशधी युक्तसेवनम् ।
अष्टमूर्तिभृद्देवपूजनम् ॥ ५ ॥

The worship done with the view that this universe is the eight-fold manifestation of God, is excellent worship.

उत्तमस्तवादुच्चमन्दतः ।
चित्तजं जपध्यानमुत्तमम् ॥ ६ ॥

Better than the praise of God is the faint muttering of His Name, and better yet is meditation with the mental repetition of His Name.

If we approach the question of *sadhana* from the stand-point of *Atma vichara* described in the passage quoted from *Self-Enquiry*, then positing a Personal God becomes absolutely superfluous. If we approach the question from the standpoint of individual acts of worship performed by an aspirant with the extroverted mind, then *Bhakti* implies the existence of a Personal God. Or, in the words of Bhagavan himself: "The ego-self is the *jiva*. It is different from the Lord of all, *Sarvesvara* (सर्वेश्वर). When through disinterested devotion the *jiva* approaches the Lord, He graciously assumes name and form and takes the *jiva* into Himself."* Now, whether it be the ceremonial act of worship, or uttering the Name, or the perception of the universe as the eight-fold manifestation, or praise or faint muttering or mental

* *Sat-Darshana Bhashya*, (3rd Edn.); The Talks, p. xiv.

repetition of the name, are any or all of these necessary at all in the case of an Impersonal. God? Or can they have any meaning at all in that case? In one word, no; because all these are definitely acts of devotion conducted by a *sadhaka* (साधक) who has not transcended the duality, without which no bodily or mental operation is possible. Such acts of devotion as are described above clearly bespeak the supreme value of the conception of a Personal God. For, as stated in the commentary to verse 5, *Upadesa Saram*, "Spirit is known to us only through matter and its forms. The seeing spirit can only see through its own spectacles. Thought can issue out only in and through moulds of matter; and symbolism and anthropomorphism are inevitable. Human brains cannot escape the employment of forms in thinking of the Formless Spirit; and hence the universal use (acknowledged or unacknowledged) of forms of worship .... Humanity needs forms and symbols for self-expression, especially in the field of religion and the deity in Its omnipresence, omniscience and kindness is sure to accept the devotion so expressed."*

Thus in these verses of *Upadesa Sarah*, Sri Bhagavan inculcates *Bhakti* as a stepping stone to *Jnana* or Knowledge. For, in his own words: "Worship of Him by name and form leads one beyond all name and form. Devotion complete culminates in Knowledge Supreme.

The significance of worship by name and form is clearly explained in Chapter 16 of *Sri Ramana Gita*.

व्यापकं परमं वस्तु भजंत देवताधिया ।
भजंश्च देवताबुद्धया तदेवान्ते समश्नुते ॥ ६ ॥

The Bhakta worships the Supreme Being as a Diety and thus worshipping, he finally ends in being merged into that (God, the Self).

देवताया नरश्रेष्ठ नामरूपप्रकल्पनात् ।
ताभ्यां तु नामरूपाभ्यां नामरूपो विजेष्यति ॥ ७ ॥

O best of men, worship of the Deity with finite names and forms helps the worshipper transcend the limitations of names and forms.

* *Upadesa Saram* (3rd Edn.): pp. 39, 40.

भक्तो तु परिपूर्णायामलं श्रवणमेकदा ।
ज्ञानाय परिपूर्णाय तदा भक्तिः प्रकल्पते ॥ ८ ॥

Even a casual *sravana* (hearing) will suffice for a full-fledged *Bhakta* to realise Perfection. Hence *Bhakti* becomes a good aid for perfect *Jnana*.

There is also the great dictum in the opening chapter of *Sri Ramana Gita*:—

उपासनं विना सिद्धिर्नैव स्यादिति निर्णयः ॥ १३ ॥

It is certain that there can be no attainment without *upasana* (devout worship in a spirit of self-dedication).

Attainment of what? Of course, of Self-realisation. In other words he lays it down once for all that *Jnana* is not possible without *Bhakti*. This dictum loses much of its significance if only we remind ourselves that *Jnana* and *Bhakti* are in essence the same. Nay, even the purpose of *Karma* and *Yoga* is not different from any other spiritual *sadhana*. This is declared by the tenth verse of *Upadesa Sarah*:—

हृत्स्थले मनः स्वस्थता क्रिया ।
भक्तियोगबोधाश्च निश्चितम् ॥ १० ॥

Firm abidance of the mind in the Heart is *Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Yoga* and *Jnana*. This is certain.

So, there is ample evidence of *Bhakti-marga* in the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi. And there is equally abundant evidence to show that in the life of the Sage the paths of Knowledge and Devotion have been identical from, perhaps, the very outset. The inwardness of his devotion to Arunachala is indicated by the mysterious feeling roused in him on the casual hearing of the name. Similarly, when he decided to leave Madura, recollection about Arunachala occurred to him without anything outside to suggest to him any such thought. It is also very difficult to explain, except on the basis of this inwardness of his devotion, why he called Arunachala "my Father". Finally, the *Tanmaya-sthiti* he attained soon after he reached Tiruvannamalai eliminated once for all the need for, and even the possibility of, his adopting the lower forms of devotion practised through *sadhanas* described in slokas 3 to 8 of *Upadesa Sarah*. It is because of Sri Ramana's realisation of the iden-

tical nature of highest Devotion with supreme Knowledge that he has repeatedly declared the oneness of the goal according to either path. "The eternal, unbroken, natural state of abidance in the Self is *Jnana*. To abide in the Self, you must love the Self. Since God is verily the Self, love of the Self is love of God; and that is *Bhakti*. *Jnana* and *Bhakti* are thus one and the same."[1] "Self-surrender is the same as Self-knowledge "[2] " Devotion complete culminates in Knowledge Supreme." [3]

Sometimes a distinction is made between Saints and Sages. Thus, broadly speaking, those who have realised the highest spiritual Truth according to *Jnana-marga* are called Sages or Seers, while those who have followed the *Bhakti-marga* are called Saints. This distinction does not involve a fundamental difference between the two, and any differentiation is more imaginary than real. For example, many of the songs of Tukaram, who is commonly called the Saint of Maharashtra, exhibit high flights of *Jnana*, whereas many poems of Ramadas, an equally celebrated contemporary of the former and his fellow-countryman, who is known as a Sage, reveal unfathomable depths of devotion. But granting the validity of such a distinction, if we are to classify Maharshi, we must say he is a great Saint as well as a great Sage inasmuch as from the beginning of his spiritual career at so tender an age as sixteen he sought the Lord with unique devotion and realised Him as the Self soon thereafter.

We in India are not quite familiar with the term mysticism as described in the West. In recent times Mysticism has become a subject for study among Indian philosophers. It is commonly said that while *Bhaktas* like Tukaram may pass for mystics, *Jnanis* like Ramadas may not. To me this appears to be neither right nor just. Both Tukaram and Ramadas are true mystics. In the words of Evelyn Underhill,[4] a true mystic is he " in whom the transcendental consciousness can dominate the normal consciousness and who has definitely surrendered himself to the embrace of Reality." In short, mysticism " believes that by the way of love and will, it reaches a point to which thought alone is unable to attain,".[5] for "it is the heart and never the

1 *Maharshi's Gospel*, Book 1.
2 *Sri Ramana, the Sage of Arunagiri* (2nd Edn) p. 67
3 *Sat-Darshana Bhashya*, (3rd Edn.) The Talks, p. xiv.
4 *Mysticism*, p. 89.
5 *Ibid*, p. 103.

reason which leads us to the Absolute." We should, therefore, say that like the seeker after the Self, of whom Sri Maharshi declares "Devotion complete culminates in Knowledge supreme," the mystic too begins with devotion and working his way from within the heart, which is the seat or instrument of *Bhakti*, and ends in perfect Knowledge. In other words, the mystic is a *Bhakta* ripened into a *Jnani*, and this is perhaps the case with Maharshi too, in whom *Bhakti* culminated in *Jnana*, and in whose spiritual ascent the heart was all in all ; this is evident from his words in *Sri Ramana Gita* (*Ch. V*)

हृदयान्नापरः परः ॥ १८ ॥

God is not other than the Heart.

दृग्दृश्यभेदधीरेषा मनसि प्रतितिष्ठति ।
हृदये वर्तमानानां दृग्दृश्यं चैकतां व्रजेत् ॥ १९ ॥

The separate identity of subject and object is characteristic of the mind, whereas they merge and unite in the Heart.

To the Maharshi, just as it was to the Western mystic, St. Catherine of Genoa, "My Me is God,"* We should, therefore, say that Sri Ramana is a great mystic of the 20th century. Nay, he is greater than a mystic; for while the mystic, like the *Yogi*, takes the *Jagrat* state as the essential field of experience, Bhagavan Sri Ramana transcends the limits of the three states, so that, as observed by Swami Siddheswarananda, "the Maharshi is, above all, a *Tattva-Jnani*." Therefore, Sri Ramana's life and realisation has an abiding value for the East as well as the West.

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* *Mysticism* p. 474.

O BHAGAVAN!

By

Chinta Dikshitulu, B.A., L.T.

When You, the unseen Bhagavan, appear before me, I get perplexed, not knowing what I should do. I long to see You without a wink of the eye. I gaze at You with the deep desire to imprint Your Image on my heart. I see You when You are seated. When You stretch Your legs, mentally I place my head on Your Feet. I fix my gaze on Your Lotus-feet. I look at Your face and Your eyes. I see You majestically seated I see You get up. I see You taking hold of the staff and the *kamandal* handed to You by a devotee. As You proceed slowly walking, I see You. With a slow gait as You go towards the Arunagiri, I see You. I see You stop for a while, while climbing the Hill. Having stopped and turned round, I see You gracing devotees with Your merciful glance.

As one going into one's own house, I see You go on the Arunadri; and make some enquiry of a devotee nearby. Climbing up and up the Hill, I see You disappear at the turning.

In ever so many ways and poses of beauty, in ever and ever so many ways I see You bestowing Your Grace on the devotees. I see You sitting and talking to them. I see You clearing their doubts, and I see You laugh. In all these forms I see You. I long to keep in my heart some one of these forms, to imprint it indelibly, and to bind it there so that it will not be lost. But why is it, O Bhagavan, that You vanish from my heart after staying but for a moment? Although I have seen You in all these forms, not one of them stays in my heart, why is it, Bhagavan?

That beauty of Yours in the majesty of being seated, that supreme serenity and grace in Your charming gaze while You recline Yourself on the pillow, that Lordship of Maheswara that marks the beauty of Your form while You are standing; that majesty, that self-awareness, that unharming love and beauty that is expressed by Your slow gait; that lion-like majesty, that mercy and condescension revealed in Your glance bestowed on the devotees while You turn back and look at them...why is it, O Bhagavan! that all these charming views and that of Your Presence I took in through my eyes to retain them

within myself, all these are slipping away, on my return home, why is it so, Bhagavan? My heart is unfit for You to live in. True it is. It is true, O Bhagavan! that my heart is full of the shades of darkness; it is true there is impurity in it, that desires have taken their abode therein, it is true. It is true indeed that passions have built castles in it. It is really a crime for me to ask You to stay in my heart, in this wretched house. But where is the way to my salvation, O Bhagavan?

And then, do you say that if my heart is to be Your abode, it should be made fit for the purpose? Can I do it, O Bhagavan? Can't You, O Bhagavan, dispel those shades of darkness with the Light of Your Form? Won't you wipe out the impurity through Your mercy, O Bhagavan? Drive away my desires through Your glance, O Bhagavan! Make this house fit for you to live in, O Bhagavan! Arrange Your seat Yourself, O Bhagavan! Decorate the place Yourself, O Bhagavan! with the auspicious designs drawn on the floor. Set the light Yourself, O Bhagavan! All these things, O Bhagavan, I am incapable of doing for myself.

"But then give Me Your heart", say You so, O Bhagavan? I do desire to give it to You. That You may be in it, I do desire to give it away to You. But it heeds not my word! I, as myself, cannot give it to You, O Bhagavan! Take it Yourself, O Bhagavan! and Yourself do live in it, O Bhagavan! But then, I recollect the verses which devotees have composed on You. I tally those descriptions with You, and with the aid of those expressions I take hold of Your Form and try to establish You in my heart. But You escape from those expressions. What to do, O Bhagavan? Those words cannot bind You, Yes. The mind too cannot bind You. True. But where is that devotion in me that can bind You? Why won't You bestow on me that devotion? "Earn it yourself," do You say so? But they say that everything can be got through Your Grace, that there is nothing mpossible for You, that even malevolent destiny flees at Your sight, And why does not my destiny flee from me?

Live in my heart, O Bhagavan! That by itself will do for me, O Bhagavan! Won't You, O Bhagavan! Won't You?

A LYRIC TO SRI RAMANA

You are the light that never pales,
The beacon-light that never fails
Nor flickers in the ruddiest gales
Blowing across life's darkened slope;
You are the comfort which endures,
The constant kindly touch that cures,
The voice that ever re-assures
The heart when it is losing hope.

You burn within my life, my art,
And in the midst of crowds, apart,
You haunt my solitary heart
That throbs unceasing to your name.
You are the mystery unique
About whom lips may hardly speak,
You make of every pain a peak
Crowned with your peace, a steady flame.

You are a huge horizon bent
Over a world of discontent
To bless us till our hearts are lent
A tint or two from out your store.
You are so close what though remote,
Even in storm you strike a note
Of safety while our floundering boat
Gives up all hope of reaching shore.

A LYRIC TO SRI RAMANA

O human body thrice divine !
How very silently you shine
Lamplike upon the borderline
Of all our struggle, all our strife.
But on your guidance we depend
And though our Lord, we call you friend ;
From lonely summits you descend
To soothe and heal the wounds of life.

Give us the high illumined grace
To make the heart your dwelling-place,
To see you clearly, face to face,
In all we feel and say and do ;
And may we evermore contain
Your presence in each passing pain,
Even as drought desires the rain,
Your mercy that is coming through.

Increase our silence and our power,
Be with us every fleeting hour,
O set our barest beings in flower
And with your love's divine increase
Within us, let the heart concern
Itself with you who reign and burn
Through every pore at every turn
Moulding the final masterpiece.

--*Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.*

MY PILGRIMAGE TO SRI RAMANASRAMAM

By

Eleanor Pauline Noye (California)

A few years ago I reached a crisis in my life; after years of anguish and sleepless nights, I was in a critical condition. When things seemed darkest I had an unusual feeling that I should go away. I discussed it with my twin, Betty, and decided to take a trip around the world. After making the reservation I became very ill and had to cancel it. One obstacle after another presented itself until it seemed as though I were not to go, and being so ill I did not care if I went or not. Still there always seemed to be something urging me to go and my sister also felt that I should.

After a few weeks of rest I felt better and made reservation on another ship that was to sail a month later; but when the time arrived for sailing I was still not able to leave my bed. The boat sailed from San Francisco through the Panama Canal reaching New Orleans a month later. The steamship agent suggested my going there by train, which takes three days instead of one month, hoping I would feel better in the meantime.

I had a very trying trip to New Orleans, and upon arriving I collapsed and was taken to a Christian Science practitioner's home, where they put me to bed and took care of me. They thought I was in no condition to take a long trip, but I felt as though I must. I could not turn back. Fortunately the boat was two weeks late; otherwise I would not have been able to sail. The steamship agent said: "You do not look very well; if the Captain sees you, I am afraid, he will not take you, as we do not carry a physician." However, finally he agreed to my going, but said, "Do not let the Captain see you until we are out at sea." Though outward conditions were very dark, I went, knowing that God would take care of me. I felt as though I were led and if I had not followed that inner voice which prompted me I would never

have had the blessed experience of finding the happiest part of my life in the presence of Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

The doctor, who vaccinated me before I left, knew that I was not well. He said: "Why are you taking this trip?" I replied, "I want to find myself." I was seeking something I had not found,—Peace. Somehow my mind would always turn to India, especially during those days when I was in bed.

We sailed from New Orleans to Capetown, South Africa, a three weeks' trip without a stop. Providence was with me again, for had the boat stopped, I believe, I would have returned home. (But God had other plans for me.) For I was torn between conflicting emotions and became worse again. My prayers seemed of no avail. I would have the most dreadful nightmares and wake up crying. I could not bear it any longer; so I sent a radiogram to the doctor, "Need help in every way, especially at night. Cold much worse, filled with fear. Will write from Capetown." I don't know what I was afraid of, but my mind was never at peace. I felt better for a while but found it necessary to send a second cable. Therefore, had the boat stopped on its way to Capetown, I should have disembarked and returned home. But Providence has always the upper hand. When we reached Capetown, South Africa, I felt much better; but as I did not like the boat I disembarked at Durban, South Africa, where I spent one month waiting for another boat.

As we approached India I decided to get off at Madras instead of going on to Calcutta, where the ship would be in drydock for two weeks. The people on board gave all sorts of reasons why I should not get off at Madras. It was very difficult to leave them; nevertheless I did, so they took me to the Connemara Hotel, saying it was not safe to stop at a second rate hotel because of the food, etc. After my friends had gone I felt lost and went to my room and, with tears in my eyes, prayed for guidance. All night the heat was intense; so the next morning I asked the proprietor if he could suggest a cooler place. He said the hill-station, Kodaikanal was lovely and cool. So I made my plans to leave Madras immediately. Motoring there, I found it to be a charming place. The very first day I met two Hindu brothers and I asked them if they knew any Seers? I have no explanation to offer as to why I put that question. I anticipated nothing. They said they knew of one at Tiruvannamalai, Sri Ramana Maharshi. "People come

from far and near to see Him. He left home," they said, "when he was twelve years old and never went to school. He is the greatest Seer in India. It is difficult to find one that is genuine." This is what they told me about Bhagavan; of course, these facts are not accurate.

I decided to leave for Tiruvannamalai the next day. My friends helped me in every way, told me to buy some bedding, etc., but did not tell me that it was the custom to take a gift to the Holy Man; in fact I knew nothing about life at an Ashram. When I left Madras I had no idea I would have this experience; but was eager to go, and felt as though something momentous was about to happen.

When I told the guests in the hotel my plans, they said it was not safe to go alone, as the place (the Ashram) was in a jungle, and I would not endure the hardships and humidity, as I had been in India only a few days and was not acclimatised. An English official and his wife insisted upon getting all the details in order to keep track of me. I bought a ticket for Madura as my friends told me to see the temples there, but I decided not to go to Madura, as I was anxious to reach my destination. So I left the car at Kodaikanal Road and took the train for Tiruvannamalai.

After arriving there I engaged a bullock cart to take me to the Ashram, where I was greeted by some of the inmates including Niranjanananda Swami, brother of Sri Bhagavan. They told me that Sri Bhagavan was on the hill, but would be in the hall shortly, and graciously invited me to have my breakfast.

My heart throbbed with expectation as I was taken to the hall. As I entered it I felt the atmosphere was filled with Sri Bhagavan's Purity and Blessedness. One feels a breath of the Divine in the Sage's presence. He was sitting on a couch, clad only in a loin-cloth, surrounded by His devotees. When He smiled it was as though the gates of Heaven were thrown open. I have never seen eyes more alight with Divine Illumination,—they shine like stars. He greeted me very tenderly and made some enquiries about me, which put me at ease. His look of Love and Compassion was a benediction that went straight to my heart. I was immediately drawn to Him. His gentleness and kindness is all-embracing. One feels such an uplifting influence in His Saintly Presence and cannot help but sense His extraordinary spirituality. It is not necessary for Him to talk, His silent influence of Love and Light

is more potent than words could ever be. I did not know what manner of man I expected to find. But once I saw Him, I said to myself, "Surely, no one like Sri Bhagavan!" I do not think there is another like Him on earth today. To see Him is to love Him. After spending the morning with Him, I had lunch at eleven o'clock and rested until two p.m. Then I returned to the hall. As I looked upon Sri Bhagavan's serene face and into His eyes which beamed with mercy, my soul was stirred. He knew how much I needed Him, while He looked straight into my heart. Every one who comes to Him is blessed; the inner Peace which is His is radiated to all. A beautiful sight is the little children kneeling before the Master as He blesses them and smiles so tenderly, sometimes taking one in His arms, reminding me of the painting, "Christ Blessing the Children." Later I walked around the grounds, talked to the devotees. At seven o'clock I had a light meal; then I had the opportunity to say just a few words to Sri Bhagavan about my journey. Some time later I went to the Traveller's Bungalow, as ladies are not allowed to stay in the Ashram at night.

I would like to say here, that the one reason why I had been in such a run-down condition was that I had not slept well for years, although I had been taking medicine, which never gave me any relief. Although I said nothing to Sri Bhagavan about this, the amazing thing was that I slept soundly the first night and thereafter without taking any medicine, though I lacked the many comforts I had been accustomed to. I received "the Medicine of all medicines, the unfailing grace of the Lord, whose name is Heart".* I arose next morning, feeling refreshed, as though I were born anew.

Soon after, one afternoon, as I was standing by the gate, Sri Bhagavan stopped, while on His way to the Hill-side, and asked me if I had more peace. His loving solicitude made me feel quite at home; and when He smiled, my joy knew no bounds.

During those sacred hours with the Master I unconsciously absorbed the Truth which He lives; it filled all my being. As a writer has said. "The Maharshi's life is but one more instance of that Indian ideal of teaching through life and not through words . . . . . His life is, in fact, His highest teaching. His teachings are but a literary expression of His Realisation."

* *Self-Realisation, the Life & Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi* (4th Edn.)

My love blossomed into deep devotion and I was filled with ineffable peace; the things which seemed so vital before were no longer of any importance. I could see things in their correct perspective; the heartaches of yesterday and thoughts of tomorrow faded into oblivion.

Every one is struck by Sri Bhagavan's love of animals. He knows the history of each one, understands their cries and calls them 'children'. Lakshmi, the cow, was quite a pet; she would go into the hall, and Bhagavan would stroke her and give her food or plantain fruits. The little monkeys are very mischievous, looking through the windows to see if someone in the hall has some fruit. And while devotees sit meditating, a monkey runs in and takes it away. Or they search under Bhagavan's couch to be sure there is nothing there. The attendants try to keep them out, but it is a difficult job, as they are sly little fellows. Bhagavan looks at them with a twinkle in His eye.

Dogs are also his companions. To quote from a letter I received from the Ashram, after my return to America,—"A deep sense of gratitude and faithfulness is an inborn instinct of the dog, and in that respect man has to accept it as the ideal for, does not the same Supreme Spirit that is all-pervading subsist also in the dog? It is the same Self that is in every being, and every thing is in the Self. Those who have realised the Self know this truth by their experience, and hence we find the tender love Sri Bhagavan has for all creatures." Here, in the Ashram, far away from the noise and confusion of the busy highways, silence reigns. It is broken only by the bleating of the sheep and goats and the songs of the birds and the shepherd's song as he takes his flocks home to rest. Time seems to stand still in this peaceful, sacred retreat, amidst the beauties of nature, with its lovely flower gardens and beautiful pools, which are surrounded by knarred oak-like trees, that greet you like old friends. It is so primitive, but therein lies its charm. It is truly the Holy-land. The air is permeated with His peace and love.

Looking upon eternal Arunachala, "The Hill of Light," one is filled with awe and is overwhelmed by a great Spiritual Power. Everything is vibrant and speaks to us in Silence. On full moon night it is especially inspiring to go around the hill. In this deep silence and quietude one readily hears the voice of God. In the inspiring words of the Master from *Five Hymns*—"Only to convey by Silence Thy Transcendent State

Thou standest as a Hill, shining from heaven to earth." One may also say with the Psalmist, "Be Still And Know That I Am God." These were among the first words spoken to me by Sri Bhagavan and the last ones before I left for America. I had always loved to meditate upon them, but now they seemed to take on a new meaning and filled my heart with bliss. I had been at the Ashram for two months, then made arrangements to sail one month later. I wanted to know more about India before going home. So I reluctantly made plans to leave the place. I had grown to love it and was very sad during those last days. Bhagavan said, "I will always be with you, wherever you go."

When the last day arrived I could not stop crying. Therefore, I did not go to the hall but sat by the pool. In the afternoon when I sat before Bhagavan He smiled and said—"She has been crying all day; she does not want to leave Me." He was so sweet and tender. Later I went to Him for His blessing; the pain of parting was almost more than I could bear; with tears in my eyes I knelt in deepest reverence and devotion before my Beloved Master. May He always be my Father, Mother and God; and may I always be His child, and whatever I do, may it be in His name!

I then said good-bye to the devotees who had been so kind to me. As I drove to the station in the little cart, my heart grew heavy because I was leaving my Bhagavan, but I had so very much to be thankful for, having had the privilege of spending two months in His presence and been blessed beyond measure. Indeed, I was not the same person who came to Him two months before. To quote from *Self-Realisation* (Page 123):—"Even like the sun, which gives physical light and sustains physical life, the Sage who has realised the Truth Eternal, imparts the inner Light of the Self to those who seek his Presence, and sustains their inner Life of the Spirit. In his Benign Presence the truly humble soul finds ineffable peace and joy. The Unseen Power which guides the pilgrim evolves also the conditions appropriate to the true spiritual needs of each soul, which may not know what is best for itself. *An apparently casual visit may become a 'benediction'*." As I look back I am ashamed of some things I did; but Bhagavan laughed, He understood I knew no better.

When I reached Madras I wanted to return to Bhagavan, I really did not want to tour India; nevertheless I went from Madras to Srinagar in Kashmir, then to Calcutta (wherefrom I expected to sail for America),

I had a pleasant trip, stopped at many interesting places along the way and was led to many people who were helpful and kind. What I would like to bring out is the way in which I was guided and protected. I had some blessed experiences, also two breath-taking ones on the train, and on one occasion I narrowly escaped death. It was the hottest season of the year, yet I felt no ill effects. A physician who was stopping at the same hotel in Agra said it was miraculous the way I travelled in the heat; he had seen strong Hindus faint like flies owing to the heat, which did not seem to bother me. I could hear Bhagavan's words: "I will always be with you, wherever you go." His dear face was always before me, no matter what I was doing. His presence filled all my heart.

Not having much money I ate food and drank water which I would not have touched in the past, but I did not feel the worse for it, all the same. When I travelled with my husband in Latin America, we had all the comforts and the best food, but most of the time I had stomach trouble. I have mentioned this only to show how one changes after being for some time in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. I did not miss any of these delicacies, as they no longer seemed to be of any importance. My mind was filled with the love of Bhagavan; by His Grace I was guided and protected as never before, sometimes almost miraculously.

My eyes were filled with tears many times as I thought of returning to America without seeing Him again. One day I seemed to hear Him say—"Come back to Me again". During the time I was away from the Master my love and faith had deepened, and I decided to return to Him as soon as possible.

I changed my plans. Instead of going back to America by the next boat, I took the train, leaving Calcutta for Tiruvannamalai. Queer to say, I felt as though I were going home! The tender way Bhagavan greeted me, as I stood before Him, will live in my heart always. I wept with joy knowing I was thrice Blessed in being able to return to Him. As I basked in His Eternal Sunshine in those silent hours of communion I was filled with His Grace.

It is a privilege to have some meals with the Master; to eat the food which He has handled is in itself a Blessing. He would arise at

dawn and help to cut the vegetables, very often helping also to prepare special dishes which were delicious. My food was prepared by the devotees especially for me, and it was wholesome and good. Bhagavan was always considerate to everyone, He wanted to be sure there was plenty of everything; and the rich and poor received the same kind attention, as also the animals; no distinction was shown. One day I saw Bhagavan stoop down and pick up three grains of rice. That simple act taught me much more than what I could have learnt by studying ten volumes on domestic economy which is so essential in present day life but is so difficult to practise. Each day brought new lessons and Blessings. He grew nearer and dearer to me as time passed and my only wish was to be by His side.

The monsoon was on, the air was fresh and clean and all the earth seemed radiant. Whenever it rained Bhagavan's attendants put a white cloth on His chest to protect His body from the cold weather. He looked like a sweet child wearing a bib, and with all His Wisdom and greatness one is struck by His childlike nature. At other times He looks like the King of kings; His poise and dignity are outstanding. When some times at night He would throw a shawl over His head, He looked like the Madonna, I would stand outside in silent adoration. Again, at other times He looked like a devoted father smiling upon His children. I loved to watch Him as He walked up the hill, just when the sun was setting. And it was my greatest delight when I could go with Him.

One morning I picked a lovely rose; my first thought was to give it to the Master. A devotee said:—"What a beautiful rose!" I replied, "Yes, it is for Bhagavan." I sat in the hall, wondering if I should give it to Him. After a few minutes I laid it on the small·foot-stool at His sofa, and he said: "What is that?" I replied, "Only a rose." He said, "Give it to me." He took it and touched with it His forehead and cheeks. I was so deeply touched, I wept.

I had the great privilege of being at the Ashram in 1939 for Sri Bhagavan's Birthday celebration when, as on such occasions, thousands of people were fed. He is, indeed, a friend of the poor. A special leaf-covered shelter is erected for the occasion, so that many devotees who come for the celebration may sit in the presence of Bhagavan. One can never forget the Master as He sits there on His couch, so majes-

tically, amidst garlands of flowers, surrounded by His loving devotees, who are so happy to be with Him at that time. It is a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving for everyone, even the animals.

As I walked along that night and looked at Arunachala, so silent, I was held spell-bound by the beautiful sight. The brightest star in the heavens shone directly above its peak like a great Beacon Light to tell us, as it were, "This is the Holy Land, the abode of Bhagavan, the Lord of the Universe, whose greatness and spiritual power have drawn men from the remote parts of the earth, who come and kneel down and worship Him, singing songs of adoration and praise to proclaim His Glory."

When I left America I longed for Peace; there was a yearning in my heart which would not let me rest. Here at the feet of the Lord of Love, peace and happiness garlanded me and enriched my being. I know that Bhagavan led me to this haven of rest. In the words of Sri Bhagavan himself:

> Within the sacred Lotus-heart of everyone,
> From mighty Vishnu up in heaven serene, to lowly
> Mortal man, the Self, as Pure Awareness, shines
> Supreme, Who is Arun-Achal-Raman Himself.
> And when thy mind in love for Him doth pine and melt
> And reach the radiant Heart, wherein He dwells as thine
> Own Self, the Lord Belov'd, Lo! then thine Inner Eye
> Would open, and, as Pure Awareness, Him espy. *

To quote from another letter from the Ashram:—"So then, Sri Bhagavan will guide you at every step; for, has He not guided you even before you knew you were really in search of Him?"

I had been planning to leave the Ashram for five months; but each time I thought I was going, something unforeseen presented itself. It was not His Will that I should go. Bhagavan says, "Your plans are of no avail." I did not want to go but felt I should; my twin sister wrote several times and said there were matters which needed my attention; and she was very ill, although I did not know it at the time; somehow I sensed it. That was probably the reason why I felt I should leave.

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* *Self-Realisation.* Page 286.

As the time to leave drew near I was very sad; I knew this time I would really go. It had been *eight months* since I returned to the Ashram for the second time! Those last days I spent with the Master were blissful. He was so kind and tender; and when He smiled at me, tears would fill my eyes. I wondered how I could ever leave the place. When the day of parting came, I could not stop crying. In the morning I walked on the Hill with Bhagavan and some other devotees, then again in the afternoon, when we had our pictures taken with Him. As I walked down the Hill with Him for the last time He alone knew what was in my heart.

The little monkeys were all lined up on either side of the Hill-path. Bhagavan told them to come and say good-bye to me. He knew I loved them also. When we reached the hall, Bhagavan read a few comforting passages from Psalms, Chapter 139, verses 7, 8, 9, and 10.

He invited me to have supper with Him, as ladies are not allowed in the dining hall at night. It was a Blessed joy to have that last meal with the Master. I shall never forget it. Just before I left I went to Him for His Blessing and wept at His feet as my heart overflowed with adoration and love. He is dearer to me than life itself. May I consecrate my life to Him! Then I said good-bye to the devotees in the Ashram, who were invariably kind to me.

I have tried in my humble way to tell about the wonderful experience I had when I was at Sri Ramanasramam with the Enlightened One, but mere words can never express the peace and joy one feels in His Presence; it must be experienced. There one truly has a glimpse of the Eternal.

As I am writing this article in 1946 (six years after I left the Ashram), I would like to say that I have felt the Master's Presence more and more with the passage of time, just as He said I would. My devotion and faith have grown through the years and will never be shaken under any circumstance. I am very happy to say that I shall be returning soon to my Beloved Master. I hear His call!

Needless to say this was the most Blessed experience of my life, my stay at the feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Lord of Love and Compassion. May I be worthy of the many Blessings and the great Love He has so graciously bestowed upon me!

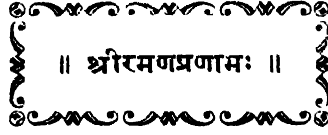
> "*Sri Ramana Maharshi is an ideal held out before mankind because of His great depth of Peace, His intripid flow of Power, His extraordinary development of Dispassion, His melting Love, His bright Wisdom, which flashes over the world's encircling darkness of ignorance, and His beatific life.*"
>
> —*Ganapati Sastri.*

Let me conclude with a quotation from *Self-Realisation*, the truth whereof the meek at heart will know:—

"He that has the most noble aim in life to know that God and the *Guru* are one, and that they are identical with the Self Supreme or Brahman, the one, eternal Truth, the Core of one's own being, the Heart, that person will be guided by destiny, independent of his individual effort, to the Benign Presence of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi." *



* *Self-Realisation*, page 316.



HOMAGE TO SRI RAMANA

रमणीयकरमणाभिध तरुणारुणसुषम
परतत्त्वविदुरुसारभृद्‌रिषट्कजिद्‌रुज ।
भवसागरतरणोत्सुकजनताश्रिततरणे
प्रणतास्तव पदपङ्कजयुगले वयममले ॥

O Blessed one, bearing the entrancing name of Ramana and the resplendence of the rising sun, O Knower of the Supreme Truth, possessed of inexhaustible spiritual power, conqueror of the six internal foes, and free from all ailments, Thou art a ship with the people eager to cross the ocean of *samsara* aboard. We bow to Thy hallowed Lotus-feet.

घनमुक्तखनिभमानस सनकादिमुनिवरैः
परिषेवित परमेश्वरवररूप सुमुदित ।
मुनिसत्तम कनकोपमचरितावनिसहन
हसदानन समदर्शक परिपालय भुवनम् ॥

O Sage, Truest of all beings, Thy heart is as pure as the cloudless sky; Thou art served by great Sages like Sanaka; Thou art verily the embodiment of the Supreme Brahman; Thou art always blissful; Thy actions are as spotless as gold; Thy forbearance is like unto that of Mother Earth; Thou hast always a smiling face; Thou lookest alike on all things. Kindly protect this world.

एम्. रामकृष्णभट्टविरचितम् —*M. Ramakrishna Bhat, M.A.*

A ROSE-PETAL A DAY AT THY BLESSED FEET

Daily I'll scatter rose-petals before
Thy blessed Feet ;
Each petal just a thought. I have no more
To render Thee in homage. It is mete
That it should be like this, for all's already Thine,
There's nothing more is mine.

And as these petals one by one do drop,
Whose perfume-sweetness lasts but for a day,
I will not stop
Asking myself repeatedly this way :
"Who thinks that he now acts ?" and "Who am I ?"
And so like this I'll try
To plumb the depth of Being, diving deep
Beyond the realms of thought to waking-sleep,
Where naught is and yet All.
For this the lesson, sitting in Thy Hall,
That I have learnt. And yet above
This seeming dry philosophy I find
A deeper lesson in Thy boundless Love
That spreads beyond all measured realms of mind.

My giving is a gain,
It will not be in vain.
For every thought I one by one discard
Will grow another feather in the wings
That carry me to Freedom. Tho' 'tis hard
What I would now accomplish, 'tis of things
That must be done, it seems, in spite of me;
My will I have surrendered unto Thee.

All that is left to me is just to pray
That many years be added to the term
That Thou wilt spend below.
For Thou in truth art my sole staff and stay,
Holding to which my purpose is more firm,
And when Thou goest I would also go.
Bound ever to Thy Feet how can I fail?
O Ramana, my *Guru*, hail, all hail!

— *Sadhu Arunachala.*
(Major A. W. Chadwick, O. B. E.)



VICTORY TO SRI RAMANA

स जयतु रमणमहर्षिर्निजगुणगणतुलितदिव्यसप्तर्षिः ।
प्रकटितनिजात्मविद्यो विज्ञानास्त्रेण शकलिताविद्यः ॥

Long live Sri Ramana Maharshi, Who in the plenitude of His merit equals the divine Seven Sages (*Sapta Rishis*), and, imparting the Knowledge of Self, cuts ignorance to pieces with the weapon of Knowledge!

श्री सुन्दरानन्दस्वामिविरचितम् —*Sundarananda Swami.*

जयतु जयतु भूमा व्योमवद्व्याप्तधामा
जयतु जयतु लिङ्गं तैजसं चारुणाख्यम् ।
जयतु जयतु देवस्सुन्दरीनन्दनोऽयं
जयतु जयतु तस्यान्तेवसद्भक्तसङ्घः ॥

Victory, victory to the Light all-extending like ether!
Victory, victory to the Pillar of Fire called Aruna (Red Hill)!
Victory, victory to the divine Son of Sundara and Sundari!
Victory, victory to His devotees!

—*a Bhakta.*

SRI RAMANA'S WONDROUS GRACE

We received the following article very late in August (1946). In the covering letter, the "self-styled devotee" vouches for the truth of his writing. To save himself from some embarrassment, he has tried to hide himself behind an assumed title. We know him well. But we do not want to embarrass him either. This much, however, we must say, he is one of the contributors to this Souvenir and his article stands along with those of other devotees in the previous pages of this Volume. Really, the writer of "Sri Ramana's Wondrous Grace" is a true devotee of Sri Bhagavan. Below is his letter and then comes his article which, we are sure, will deeply interest the reader, who is the final judge for deciding things for himself.

[*Ed.*]

Dear Sir,

I am sending you herewith an article. If it meets with your approval, it may be included in the Souvenir Volume. As I have described here some experiences which should not be divulged to anybody else, I cannot publish my name. Kindly excuse me for this. I declare that the statements made are all true to my knowledge.

Whether you publish it or not, I request you to kindly place the article before Sri Bhagavan, so that He may remember me and take thought of me. *

With *Pranams* to Sri Bhagavan,

Yours sincerely,
A self-styled devotee.

It was on a cold afternoon of December that I found myself boarding the Madras Mail with a view to visit Sri Ramanasramam. For a couple of years previous to this, the intention of going on a pilgrimage to Sri Ramanasramam had been lurking in my mind now and then. A few months back, a strong urge came, and I made all arrangements for starting for the Ashram. Suddenly the news came that the East Coast was being bombed by the Japanese. I was dissuaded from going there at that time. A sense of frustration came over me, and the desire to go there sank within, leaving a vague resolve to visit the Ashram in December. December came, the expectation again floated in my mind but there was no agitation in it, as previous frustrations had made the mind somewhat resigned. However, a day was fixed and all arrangements were made for my departure. I was undecided and left everything to circum-

* Sri Bhagavan is expected to identify the 'me" without the writer revealing it himself! (Ed.)

stances, and circumstances so moulded themselves that I found myself boarding the train for Madras on the next day.

The journey was uneventful. Though there was the usual war-time congestion in the trains, I was comfortably seated and also found sleeping accommodation at night. On the afternoon of the second day of the journey I picked up a companion; he expressed his intention to visit Ramanasramam to pay his respects to Maharshi and so we travelled together.

We reached Madras on the afternoon of the third day. On enquiry we were informed that a train would be just leaving the Egmore station for Villupuram, from where we would have to change for Tiruvannamalai, our destination. It was about midnight when we alighted at Villupuram. After some time the train came. It was not crowded at all and we two occupied one small compartment in it.

Ever since I came to know of Maharshi the thought of Arunachala had always been in my mind but it did not give rise to any strong emotion up till now. Only, the mind was in a gloomy mood. When we were a few stations from Tiruvannamalai the thought of a rebuff at the Ashram became very strong and roused a correspondingly strong emotion in me. As I was unobserved, my one companion being fast asleep and there being nobody else in the compartment, I gave free vent to my emotion.* After some time it spent itself and the mind became resigned. The train now stopped at Tiruvannamalai. I roused my companion, who was still sleeping and we set our feet on the sacred soil of Tiruvannamalai.

It was already dawn and we came out of the station. The Hill of Arunachala now caught our eyes. Silent and majestic it stood there, as if immersed in deep meditation. We saluted the *Jyotirlingam* and drove direct to the Ashram.

It happened to be the annual Birthday of Maharshi. *Bhaktas* were preparing to celebrate the day on a large scale. Huge preparations were being made for feeding a few thousand people and a big *pandal* was erected for the purpose.

At the farther end of the first quadrangle a small enclosure was erected and a seat was arranged there for Maharshi. Leaving a small space in front of the enclosure for the passage of pilgrims, the whole of the quadrangle and the adjoining verandah were crowded with visitors.

Maharshi took his seat within the enclosure. Pilgrims came in a line, prostrated themselves before him, paid their respects and then passed out of the quadrangle. A continuous stream of people passed in this way for a couple of hours. I was all along anxious to catch his eyes but could not do so. When the crowd became thinner, I got up, walked up to the enclosure and took my stand just outside it, towards the right of Maharshi. With folded hands and tearful eyes I stood there, eagerly expecting to catch his eyes. Though some people were asked to pass on to make room for others, I was fortunately not disturbed. I continued standing there, allowing ample room for the free passage of other pilgrims who still continued to pass on. I waited and waited. Mixed emotions pulsated through the body and tears flowed down the cheeks, (I know not why). My whole being was irresistibly being drawn towards him. At last he was turning his head towards his right, that is, in my direction. Expactation rose high, but, alas, his gaze passed on without falling on me! Frustration further intensified my sense of helplessness and my whole being poured forth silent entreaty in convulsive sobs. Ah! now, immediately after, I seemed to obtain a side glance from his eyes, while a sweet smile beamed on his face. A peculiar sensation passed through my body and my whole being seemed to be churned. A minute later I passed out of the quadrangle.

* I have used the first person only as a matter of convention. As a matter of fact, this and the other states of mind and body, described later as experienced by me, were simply produced in me and I had no hand in their production. I tried to reproduce these states afterwards but could not do so.

The next morning I got up early, and after finishing my bath, attended the morning prayers in the hall. Well-versed Brahmins recited Vedic Hymns. Some *slokas* offering homage to Maharshi were also recited. All these were done as routine work every morning and evening. After the prayers are over, all assemble in the dining hall and take their breakfast with Maharshi. Maharshi also takes the two principal meals along with all the guests. The same food as is served to Maharshi is also served to one and all present, and he does not allow any discrimination in this matter.

I was eager to put my case before Maharshi and tried to find out somebody who would introduce me to him and speak to him on my behalf. I approached some inmates of the Ashram but every one of them told me that no introduction or intermediary was necessary here, any one could personally approach Maharshi and speak to him directly. But I could not muster sufficient courage to speak to him or rather I did not know what to speak to him. Thus the second day also passed away without my being able to make any contact with him. I had only a few days at my disposal, and two days had already gone. Would this journey, so much trouble and such a cost, would all these be for nothing? These thoughts overwhelmed me and goaded me to offer most earnest prayers.

Next morning I entreated another inmate of the Ashram to put my case before Maharshi. He looked at me for a moment, and then advised me to write down whatever I intended to say on a piece of paper and to place it before Sri Bhagavan. He also gave me a piece of paper. Write down! What should I write down? But I was not in a thinking mood then. I wrote down whatever came to my mind. He very kindly took the piece of paper, went to the hall, followed by me, and placed the paper before Maharshi, speaking something to him in Tamil. Maharshi read it and smiled, and smiling he turned towards me I was sitting there, with folded hands and eyes filled with tears. As he looked at me I was overwhelmed and a violent emotion convulsed my body which set Maharshi laughing. He laughed merrily for some time and then silently folded the paper and left it on a book-shelf which stood nearby. He did not speak to me nor did he seem to pay any further attention to me. The mind cannot remain in a tense state for long; sheer exhaustion calms it down. My mind calmed down after some time. The bell rang summoning us to dinner and we followed Maharshi to the dining hall.

I had placed my case before Maharshi. He did not even speak to me; rather he laughed at me! There was nothing more to be done. I must return home and be a laughing-stock also to my friends and relatives. What could be done? He could not be forced to bestow Grace. With these thoughts the mind became resigned.

After the night meal they used to spend half an hour in meditation in the hall in Maharshi's presence. Mechanically I followed them and sat with them in the hall. A few minutes passed. Then suddenly I felt a pleasant coolness inundating me. It seemed to emanate from the very bones, cooling the whole being. Is this the spiritual fragrance spoken of as emanating from Maharshi? Whatever it might be, I had no doubt that it came from Maharshi and at his will.

This was on the night of the third day of my visit. On the next day, while sitting before Maharshi, I experienced a sudden pull in the region of the heart. I was astonished and, as I sought to observe it, it passed away. Nothing like the experience of the previous night was repeated. The remainder of the day passed in keen expectation, but nothing happened, even during the meditation period after the night meal. Perhaps expectation obstructed its manifestation.

Next morning, i.e., on the fifth day of my stay at the Ashram news came of further heavy bombing of the Eastern Coast-line by the Japanese, and I naturally became anxious for my family. Moreover, as I did not experience anything unusual during the meditation periods of the previous night and of that morning, I thought that I had obtained what I deserved and that nothing more would be gained by a further stay at the Ashram. So

I decided to return home. In the afternoon I wrote out my intention to go home on a piece of paper and placed it before Maharshi. He read it, silently folded the paper and left it on the shelf. He spoke nothing and did not even look at me. Another rebuff.

I made preparations for my departure, packed up my small belongings and after taking my evening meal requested an inmate of the Ashram to kindly get a carriage for me; but I was told that no carriage would be available at that hour, that I should have informed him earlier so that one might have been fetched from the town. I was thus compelled to stay at the Ashram for another day.

Next morning I attended the usual prayers. I did not experience anything abnormal during the meditation period. Discussions generally take place when they assemble in the hall after breakfast. Maharshi also answers questions from earnest seekers. That morning also discussions were going on. As they were talking mostly in Tamil (a language not known to me) my attention was not attracted till I found some people turning their heads and laughing at me. On enquiry I learnt that they were discussing the subject-matter of my first letter to Maharshi. Evidently, he had spoken something to them regarding this letter. Though made a laughing-stock, I was still glad to find that he had at last taken notice of me. I took part in the discussions and, as I was in the back row, some distance away from them, they asked me to come nearer so that there might not be any difficulty in following each other, and I obeyed. I was thus brought very near Maharshi's seat. Our discussions over, I heard Maharshi say, "He is concentrating on the reflection and complains that he cannot see the original." It struck me forcefully. What did he mean by reflection and what was the original? I shut my eyes and tried to find out the meaning. Immediately after, I felt a pull in the region of the heart, similar to what I felt two days previously but much stronger in
intensity. My mind was completely arre
stilled, but I was wide awake. Suddenly,
out any break in my consciousness, the
flashed forth! It was self-awareness, pu
simple, steady, unbroken and intensely
as much brighter than ordinary consciousness as is sunlight brighter than the dim light of a lamp. In ordinary consciousness the "I"-sense dimly remains in the background,—as a matter of inference or intuition,—the whole of the consciousness being occupied by the object. Here, "I" came to the foreground, occupied, or rather became, the whole consciousness and intensely existed as pure consciousness, displacing all objects. I *was*, but I was neither the subject nor the object of this consciousness. I WAS this consciousness, which alone existed. There were no objects. The world was not, neither the body nor the mind—no thought, no motion; time also ceased to exist. I alone existed and that I was consciousness itself, self-luminous and alone, without a second.... Suddenly, and again without any break in my consciousness, I was brought back to my normal, ordinary consciousness.

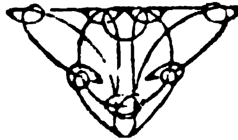
A great miracle had been performed in broad daylight in the presence of so many people, without their knowing it. No argument of the greatest philosophers and scientists of the world will now make me doubt the possibility of experiencing the "I" in its pure state or pure consciousness, without any subject-object relationship. Of course, I myself had not the least inkling of such a state even a second earlier, and I never expected to get such an experience. I, an insignificant creature, wallowing in the mud of mundane existence, and without any *Sadhana*, being granted this supreme experience!—an experience which is rarely obtained even by great Yogis after austerest spiritual practices strenuously performed for ages together. Such is the wonder of His Grace!—immeasurable and unfathomable Grace! Truly has it been said—"Unasked Thou givest, this is Thy imperishable fame."

As soon as I was brought to my normal consciousness, I opened my eyes and looked at Maharshi. I knew from the heart of my heart that it was Maharshi who had very graciously
ce, but he appeared to
, as if nothing had
t even looking at me!
rformed this miracle?
Is this then what is

meant by — मौनव्याख्या प्रकटित परब्रह्म तत्त्वम् । *Through Silence is revealed the nature of Parabrahma by the Guru* Who can comprehend ?

The experience so much amazed me that I even forgot to express my heart-felt gratitude to Maharshi. I could not at that time even properly evaluate this supreme experience. I looked at my comrades. They did not seem to notice me, and so were ignorant of what had happened. In like manner, unknown to others, to how many people has he graciously granted this and even higher experiences ? He only knows. I looked at the clock, it was 20 minutes past ten. But as I did not look at the clock before this state supervened, I cannot say for how long I was in this wonderful state. A little later we followed Maharshi to the dining hall and took our meal.

The experience left a very cheerful mood in me. I felt completely carefree. The thought of home or of bombing did not trouble me any further and I thought of staying in the Ashram for a few days more. But man only proposes. Just after the night meal was over a certain gentleman came to me and said that he had already arranged a conveyance for me and a carriage was waiting for me at the gate to take me to the station! I was a little offended. Who asked him to bring a carriage ? I had given up the idea of leaving the Ashram to-day. But why should I blame him? He was present on the previous night when I asked for a carriage and saw my plight at not being able to start home for want of a carriage. In order that the same thing might not happen again, he had very kindly taken upon himself the duty of helping me by arranging for a carriage. How could he be aware of the change which had come over me? Moreover, he was only an instrument. I therefore said nothing to him. He took me to Maharshi, introduced me to him and explained to him that I was leaving for home. I prostrated myself before Maharshi, took leave of him and started for the station. The previous day I had decided to go but was compelled to stay ; this day I decided to stay but was compelled to go ! Mysterious are His ways !



INDEX

[A NOTE :—*This Index is intended not only to serve the purpose of an alphabetical list of important names, ideas and philosophical concepts contained in the preceding pages of this Volume, but also to serve as a guide to the reader, who seeks to understand the deep and universal significance of the life and teachings of the great Sage, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (referred to in the Index as the Sage) and the abiding spiritual influence of his presence as embodying the Supreme Truth sought by all earnest aspirants in the East as well as in the West. Where a particular item in the Index constitutes, in relation to the life and teachings of the Sage, an important and original observation by the writer of an article in this Volume, his name is given in brackets immediately before the particular page reference. Original prose contributions alone, are covered by the references given in this Index.*—ED.]

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